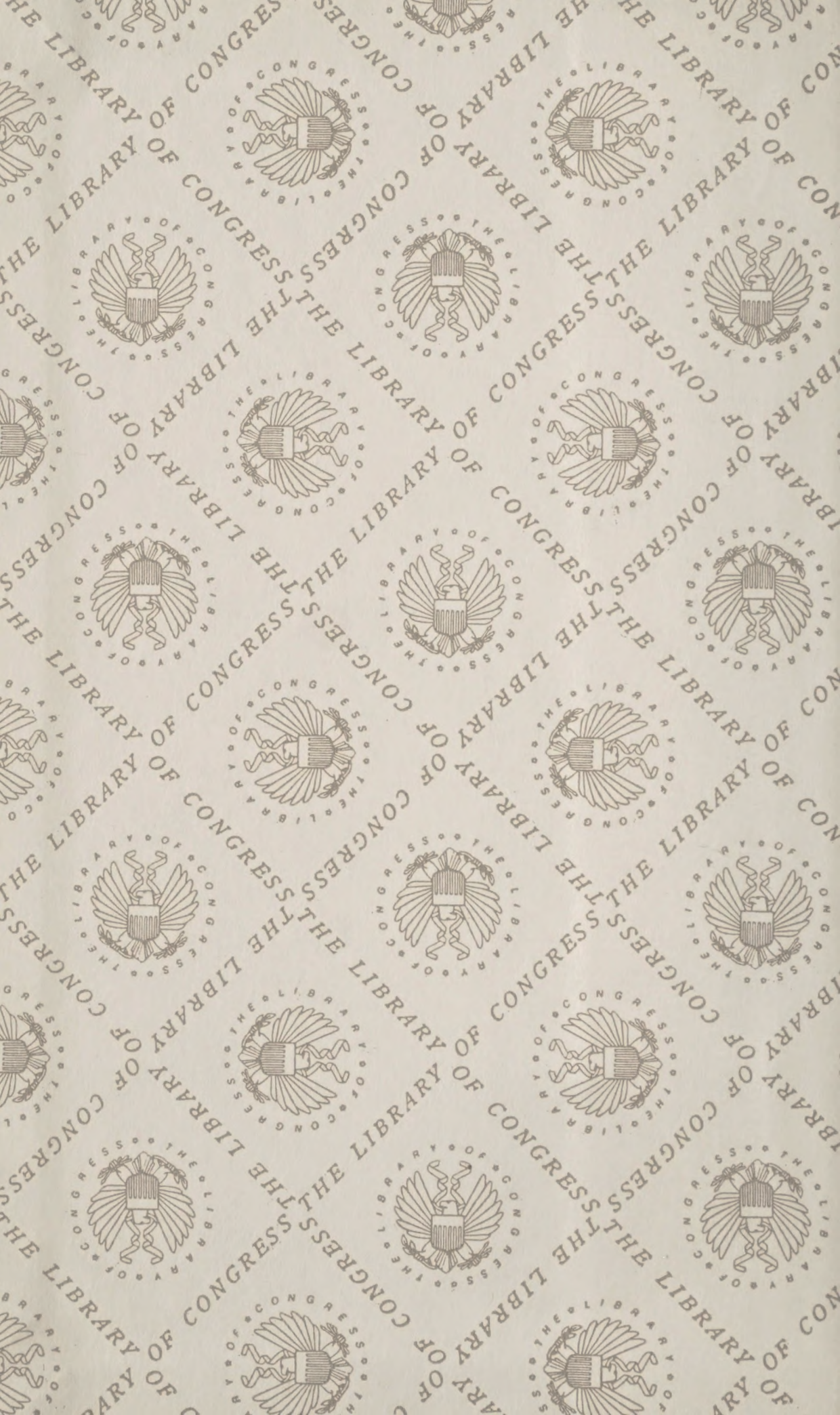
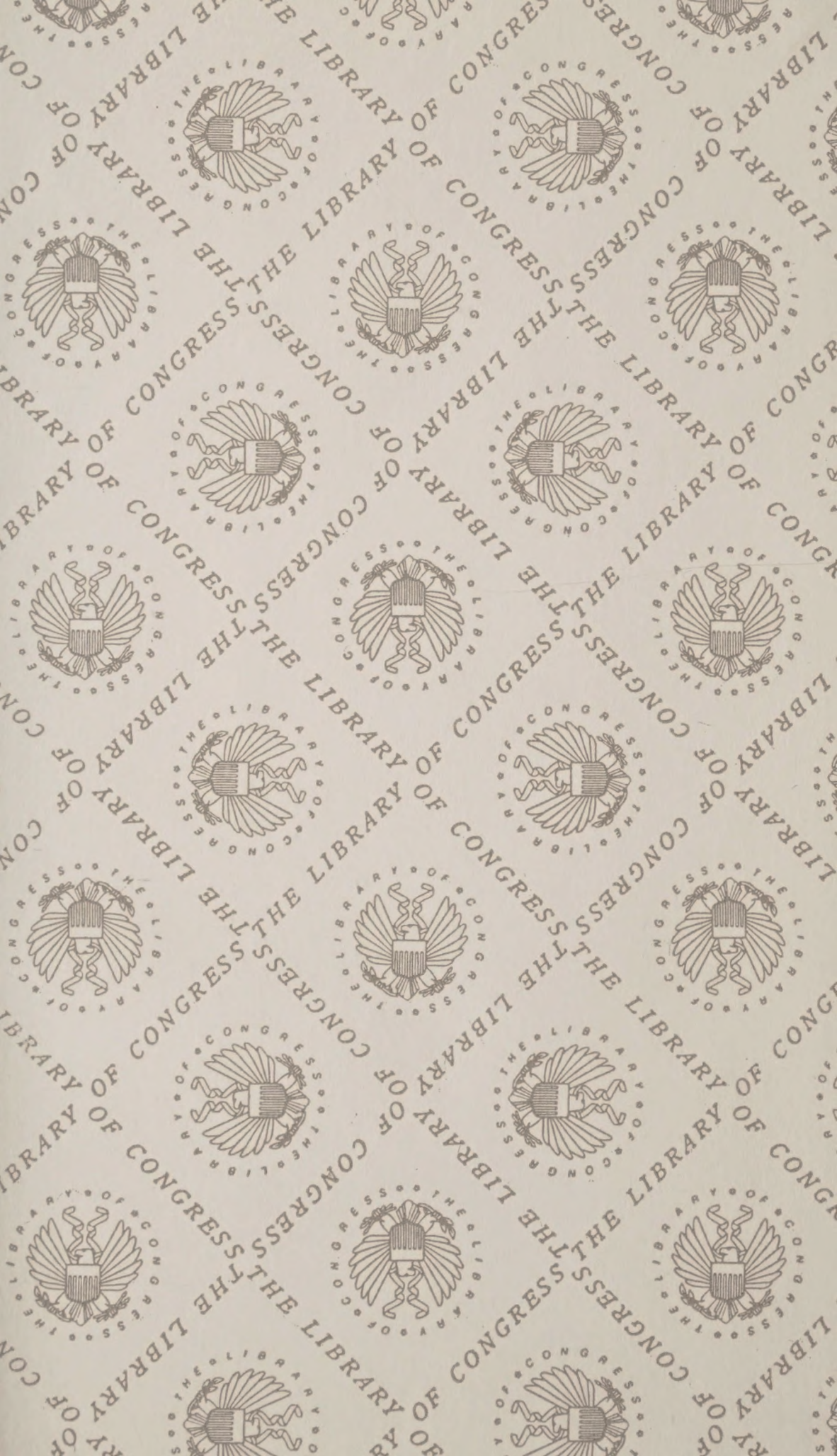






MORE THAN SHE COULD BEAR.

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TO
THE HONORABLE STEVENSON ARCHER,
OF MARYLAND,

This Volume is Inscribed,

IN TOKEN OF A FRIENDSHIP WHICH HAS
BEEN AS PLEASANT AS IT HAS BEEN LASTING.

P R E F A C E.

IT would perhaps be near the truth to say, that, outside of Louisiana and Texas, not a greater proportion than one in ten thousand of our citizens ever heard of the Gachupin War, which took place in the latter State nearly sixty years ago, and with which this story is intimately connected. Yet many of the events of that war are of the deepest interest ; and it may not misbecome the author to state why, being of so much interest, they are not more widely known.

One reason doubtless is, that nearly all the Americans who were engaged in it, fell on the different fields of battle. Then again, the war between the United States and Great Britain broke out simultaneously with this Gachupin war ; in consequence of which coincidence the exciting events at home so absorbed the people and the press, that the fierce struggle which was raging just beyond our borders, commanded but little attention. The mails seldom penetrated into that wild and remote region ; newspaper correspondents were exceedingly rare thereabouts, and newspapers themselves were almost unknown within several hundred miles of the scene of operations. Events, therefore, were but meagrely chronicled at the time.

Moreover, it was then, as it still is, notoriously diffi-

cult to get out of those south-western border-men a connected and detailed account of their own exploits; and as they were even poorer writers than talkers when they themselves were the theme, they have since dropped off, one by one, without giving the public their experience, — until it is quite probable there is not now a single one remaining who served throughout that war.

The above state of things, it is hoped, may serve, in some sort, as an apology for a larger proportion of historical matter being admitted into this story than is usually embraced in works of fiction not avowedly historical. There are only two notable instances in the volume of the author venturing to draw on his imagination to supply a hiatus existing in the records. One is the extraordinary conduct and the immediately following, if not resulting, death of Colonel Magee, the commander of the patriot army during the first half of the war: (one account says he died of consumption — another, that he killed himself.) The other instance is the butchery, in cold blood, at San Antonio de Bexar, of fourteen prominent Spanish officers and officials who had been captured, and the trial of the perpetrators thereof. In both these instances of the author's attempt to substitute invention for lost facts, it is hoped that the characterization of the individuals concerned is sufficiently consistent with their historical characters.

A closing word regarding the title of the book. I had called it "The Neutralians;" and still think this the most appropriate name it could have had. But, with all the sensitiveness of a new author, I fancied that, if it should go forth so named, "The Hub Bub Boo Exterminator" (published in Hub Bub Boo City,

by Allgood, Nobad & Co.) might perpetrate a critique on it, beginning somewhat after the following savage fashion, to wit:

“It is evident that this fellow is on a *new trail*: hence he very fittingly calls his book, ‘The Neutral-ians,’—which is, indeed, about the only original idea in the whole volume.” And so on, and so forth.

With this incubus of utter annihilation threatening, I was fain to change the title to “More Than She Could Bear.” To be sure, the aforesaid literary Mohawk may object even to this. “Now, we don’t exactly know,” he may growl, “how much ‘*She Could Bear*,’ as we merely glance at the books which we criticise,—but we do know that this story is More Than *We* Could Bear, if we were to try our ‘level best.’”

Well, we will let the second name stand, anyhow. Perhaps the savage may not think of this, after all our *tremor cordis*. Nay, peradventure he may not even deign to notice us at all!

H. B.

July 9, 1871.

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MORE THAN SHE COULD BEAR.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

There may be matter in it. — *Winter's Tale.*

FEW persons now living, except those in the immediate vicinity, know anything about the history of a certain narrow strip of territory lying between Texas and Louisiana, which for fourteen years was designated as "The Neutral Ground." Nay, few have ever heard of its existence; and yet, during a century and a half, many interesting events occurred within its narrow bounds,—all the more interesting, indeed, to such as are conversant with them, from the very fact that they are known to but few. And inasmuch as the events of this story transpired for the most part within its borders, it behooves me to treat of it here, so far as is requisite to the proper understanding of what I have to relate: although what I have to relate embraces but a year or two of its one hundred and fifty years of eventful history.

The very name, Neutral Ground, essentially implies that there has been, between two or more parties, a dispute for territory, resulting in a compromise, temporary or other. In this case, the contestants had been Spain and France. According to the international laws agreed upon by European governments, and designed to have special application to discoveries made in America, there

can be no manner of doubt that France had established a clear right to all the territory thereabouts. By those laws, if any number of Europeans took possession of a coast, it gave the nation to which they owed allegiance an enduring right to all the territory watered by streams disem-boguing along that coast, even to their minutest ramifications and their fountain-heads.

Robert Cavalier, a bold knight of Normandy, in France, and commonly known as La Salle, left Canada in the year 1682 with a few companions, and, reaching the headwaters of the Illinois, floated down that stream to the Mississippi and thence to the mouth of the great river,—taking, as he went along, solemn and formal possession in the name of his most serene and most august Majesty Louis XIV.

That monarch was so well pleased with La Salle's exploit—which the latter took precious good care to report at the court in person—that he fitted out for him a fine fleet, having on board several hundred colonists, that he might extend still further the already magnificent possessions of France. Accordingly, in the year 1684, La Salle sailed forth, and in due time landed, though unintentionally, on the coast of Texas. Here he established his colony and built a fort for its protection, which he called, in honor of his royal patron, Fort St. Louis. A few years afterwards he was waylaid and basely murdered by two of his own men, somewhere in the vicinity of the Neutral Ground, whilst engaged in exploring the interior of the country.

By these various acts of settlement and exploration the whole of Texas, as well as Louisiana, became, beyond all question, according to the international law above referred to, the rightful property of the French king.

On the other hand, the Spaniards claimed that some

"tall admiral" of theirs, a hundred years before, had caught a glimpse of that coast through his spy-glass, from the main-top, as he glided past with his fleet in search of the El Dorado. This fleeting title was all they had to urge.

To be sure, after a few years, the fort which La Salle had built was taken by the Indians, and all the garrison, as well as the colonists, butchered, or carried off into a hopeless captivity, leaving no French settler in all the land; while, soon after the massacre, the Spaniards brought from Mexico a few soldiers and friars, and established one or two missions in Western Texas for the conversion of the wild Indians. In about three years, however, these missions were abandoned, and for seventeen years Texas lapsed wholly under the aborigines. So that the original claim, made good by La Salle, had certainly not been invalidated up to that time.

In the year 1714, Luis San Denis, a restless and daring Frenchman, was sent by the French Governor of Louisiana to establish the post of Natchitoches, that country being then a wilderness. Leaving a few men at that point, San Denis proceeded, with about a dozen others, to the Rio Grande. Here he married a Spanish lady, and soon afterwards prevailed upon some of her relations to accompany him back to Louisiana, for the purpose of erecting a smuggling-post east of the Sabine, the king of Spain having prohibited all manner of trade on pain of death.

Along with these came other Spaniards, with the holier intention of founding various missions. And there, right in the heart of what was subsequently the Neutral Ground, smuggling and praying went swimmingly on, side by side, doubtless aiding each other very materially. The post and mission were located at a place called Adayes, — from the name of the surrounding tribe of Indians, — fifteen miles di-

rectly west from Natchitoches, and about the same distance from the Sabine.

Another post, and a mission, were soon established by the Spaniards near the present town of Nacogdoches, about thirty miles from the eastern bank of the same river; and, indeed, throughout the southern and western portions of Texas the Franciscan friars re-established their old missions and built new ones. From that time, Texas, although still rightfully—that is, by the law of nations—belonging to France, was virtually wrested from her by Spanish occupation. San Denis, to be sure, in 1719, drove the Spaniards from their post, at Adayes, and forced them beyond the Sabine; but they soon returned, escorted by the Marquis of Aguayo, Governor of Texas and Coahuila, at the head of five hundred mounted soldiers, and ever afterwards claimed jurisdiction for Spain as far as the Arroyo Honda (Deep Creek), in the eastern portion of the Neutral Ground, and only a few miles west of Natchitoches.

In 1761, France, finding herself fearfully prostrated by a long war with England, which had been brought about by boundary disputes in America, applied to Spain, her ally in that war, to protect Louisiana from British encroachments, then threatening that territory. Spain being by this time reduced to a pitiable condition, was not equal to the task of guarding her own huge, crumbling fabric, much less could she afford to assume the dignity of a protectorate over another's dominions. She, therefore, respectfully, but firmly, declined the meedless honor.

Accordingly, the French king, brought to still worse straits by the continuance of the war, ceded to Spain all his immense territory west of the Mississippi, from its head to its mouth, for the purpose, it would seem, of preventing its falling into the hands of the British; for very

soon afterwards she was forced to cede to England all her possessions *east* of the river — out of which half a dozen powerful States have since been carved — and Canada into the bargain.

At this time the entire population of Texas, leaving out the roving savages, did not amount to more than fifteen hundred, one half of whom were Europeans or of European descent, the remainder being converted and domiciliated Indians.

The annexation of Louisiana to Spain wrought quite a revolution in this remote region. Nacogdoches, before but a missionary station, began to assume the appearance of a town; and by means of an increasing commerce the citizens amassed considerable wealth and improved in politeness. On the other hand, Adayes, which contained about forty houses, began to languish, and continued to decline until 1790, when it was deserted by the whites; and as none remained but converted Indians, these were sent to some distant mission. On the whole, Texas, at the close of the eighteenth century, had advanced but little from her condition of eighty years previous.

In the year 1800, Spain and France made a secret treaty, by which the former agreed to retrocede Louisiana so soon as the latter should have effected certain political changes in Europe redounding to Spain's advantage. In the following year, France having complied with her part of the specified terms, the promised transfer was made, with the understanding, however, as there is good reason to suppose, that there should be no transfer of the same by France to the United States on any condition whatsoever.

This retrocession was no doubt made, and this proviso inserted, by Spain, for the express purpose of establishing a barrier between her own possessions and the United States, whose citizens she very much feared would infuse into the

oppressed masses of Mexico the dangerous spirit of liberty that had actuated *them* to throw off the yoke of Great Britain, which could not compare in severity with the yoke which she herself was pressing upon the submissive necks of the Mexicans. In fact, when France had offered her this magnificent present, in 1762, she was for a time loth to accept it, for the very reason that its acceptance would remove the barrier, even then desired, but which subsequent events had made absolutely essential, she thought, to the retention of her colonial possessions. It was not long, however, before she began to look this huge gift-horse in the mouth; and after a thirty years' inspection she returned it as above stated.

In 1803, Napoleon, who then ruled France, fancying he perceived certain signs that Great Britain, with whom he was at war, was about to pounce upon his newly acquired territory, came suddenly to terms with President Jefferson's agents, with whom he had been higgling for some time, and through them sold Louisiana to the United States for the sum of fifteen millions of dollars. This act displeased Spain no little, inasmuch as it not only brought the pestilent Americans, whom she so much dreaded, in direct contact with her impressible Mexican population, but at the same time showed unmistakably that she had sustained a dead loss of no inconsiderable amount, which might as well have gone, a year before, to replenish her depleted coffers, as now those of France.

CHAPTER I.

This place is famous for the creatures
Of prey that keep upon 't. — *Winter's Tale*.

Escalus. — What do you think of the trade? Is it a lawful trade?

Clown. — If the law would allow it, sir?

Escalus. — But the law will not allow it: nor shall it be allowed in Vienna. — *Measure for Measure*.

Though authority be a stubborn bear, yet he is often led by the nose with gold. — *Winter's Tale*.

I AM sorry I cannot begin my story with the impressive spectacle of the "Solitary Horseman." Having, with the hope of accomplishing that very difficult artistic arrangement, racked my imagination even to a point at which I feared the effect of any further strain upon it, I am forced to abandon it, though very loth, and can only promise to come as near the genuine thing as my poor abilities and the circumstances that environ the case will admit of. Should I, however, at any future day trouble my gentle readers with another tale, I hope, by the assiduous culture of my æsthetic sense in the meanwhile, to produce the thorough-bred article, instead of the very mongrel affair to be now presented.

About daybreak, one autumn morning sixty years ago, a Mexican, belonging evidently to the lower classes of the "blanketed nation," sleekly attired in so far as greasiness of apparel could constitute him so, and withal bestriding a very scrawny mule, trotted briskly into Natchitoches, which was at that time the only town on the western frontier of Louisiana.

This man's object was to convey to the commandant of the United States forces in the town a note, soliciting a detachment of his command to escort across the "Neutral Ground" a considerable train of pack-mules, together with their drivers and proprietors.

This Neutral Ground was brought into existence about five or six years before, as a temporary compromise of those heated boundary disputes between the United States and Spain, which commenced soon after the former had purchased Louisiana from France, and continued for about a year, the United States claiming to the Sabine, the Spanish authorities declaring themselves unwilling to yield a single foot of territory west of Red River.

This controversy had been carried on, with more or less asperity, for nearly a century, between the two European powers just named, so that the United States merely took up the matter at the precise point at which France had left it.

In the year 1805 numerous outrages were committed by Spanish troops on American citizens within the territory claimed by the United States. A scientific party, sent out during that year by the President to explore Red River, was arrested by the Spanish authorities and sent home. On another occasion several Americans were seized a few miles from Natchitoches, and sent under guard three hundred miles to western Texas. Again, Spanish troops tore down the American flag, which was displayed a short distance from the town just named, and trampled it under foot. All these insulting acts were perpetrated at points clearly within the limits of the new purchase, and could not be suffered to remain long unnoticed by the United States government.

Accordingly, the commander of the United States forces in that region was ordered by his government to expel the

offenders, unless they could be induced to withdraw by peaceful negotiation.

The correspondence which now passed between the respective commanders was spun out to a year's duration. During this whole period the opposing armies confronted each other, and there was more than once imminent danger of a bloody arbitrament. Prudent counsels, however, in the end prevailed; and it was agreed that until the two contending governments should establish a boundary that should be mutually satisfactory, there should be a neutral territory not to be encroached upon by either party, except in certain extraordinary cases, which were duly specified in the agreement, — an arrangement which soon received the sanction of both governments.

The scope of country thus fixed upon to be kept inviolate was a wilderness almost entirely covered with timber. It extended from the Sabine, on the west, to a creek, called by the Spaniards the Arroyo Honda, on the east.

This creek is the result of one of the many freaks of Red River. It is projected from the parent stream just below the southern terminus of the Great Raft, and after spreading out into an extensive sheet of water, then and perhaps still known as Spanish Lake, courses sluggishly around in a sweep of some twenty miles, and re-enters the river just below the town of Natchitoches, thus forming quite a large island, on which that town is situated.

Through the middle of this territory, and bearing nearly north and south, runs a slightly elevated ridge, which slopes very gently on either side, the western slope giving origin and passage to the numerous brooks which find their noiseless way to the Sabine, while the eastern declivity accommodates such as flow into the Arroyo Honda and into the other capricious wanderings of the great Red.

From the Arroyo Honda to the Sabine — respectively the

eastern and western limits of this neutral territory — the distance was about twenty miles. Its extent from north to south, in which direction the limits were rather vaguely defined, may have been about thirty miles, so that the whole territory may be said to have approximated in extent two counties of average size in the old States.

The great road that led from Natchitoches directly west to Nacogdoches, which was then the only town of any note in eastern Texas, ran through the heart of the Neutral Ground. This part of the road was only a short section of the great thoroughfare running from Natchez on the Mississippi entirely through to San Antonio de Bexar in western Texas, and along which for nearly a hundred years had passed all the illicit trade that was carried on between the citizens of Louisiana on the one hand and the Spaniards and Mexicans on the other.

No sooner had the exact nature of this transaction between the two nations spread abroad, than adventurers of all kinds, and from all directions, flocked to the Neutral Ground. Their motives for this immigration were various. The fugitive from justice went thither, because, not having yet been able to find a country where the law suited his peculiar bent, he would fain seek one where there was no law at all. The would-be plunderer, whose feeble practical discrimination betwixt *meum* and *tuum* had thus far triumphed only by reason of the constantly overhanging terrors of justice, went from much the same motive. The desperado went because he might reasonably hope to find there other desperadoes, with whom he could cut and slash, day in and day out, to his heart's content. The romantic youth went, because his heated fancy had limned it forth in pleasing guise, such as it really was not. The stripling of ardent temperament, who had been reading the wild tales of Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, *et id omne genus*,

went as the necessary consequence of such temperament and such reading. And, though last, not by any means least, some of Lafitte's men, of all nations and of all grades of ferocity, sated probably with the monotony of Barrataria, at that time the great buccaneer's headquarters, and being resolved to indulge in a little variety further in the interior of the country, deserted at once their leader and their old haunts, and flew to the novelties of NEUTRALIA, as I shall venture to call this wild region.

Some of the men composing this heterogeneous mass brought with them their wives, such as they were, and their mistresses, and there in the dense woods erected huts to shelter them against that genial clime's few days of inclement weather.

If these freebooters cultivated the soil at all, it was only to a very limited extent. They were such men as would rather die by the hangman than live by the sweat of their brows. Thus established, they at once fell to work, like the earnest devils that they were, and drew their subsistence from the traders who, as before stated, passed over the great thoroughfare which bisected the Neutral Ground. Sometimes they only levied black-mail on them, and then let them go with so much as was left; but much oftener they would appropriate to their own use the whole available property captured.

All this they could do with a slighter degree of compunction, — supposing such men to know of degrees at all in any matter of the kind, — from the notorious fact that the traders whom they plundered were not themselves engaged in a legitimate business, the laws of Spain positively interdicting, under pain of death, all kinds of trading whatsoever with citizens of the United States. This prohibition arose mainly from the fear that intercourse with a free people might finally engender among the ignorant classes of

Mexico rebellious notions against that lawful sovereign, who, although he ruled them by "divine right," ruled them with almost diabolical severity.

This has been called "the oyster policy"; and as the trader was engaged in opening Spain's oysters, the freebooter could see no great harm in snatching them away, when opened, from one to whom they did not really belong, and whom he regarded as in no respect better than himself.

To be sure, the Spanish authorities just over the border winked at the unlawful trade thus carried on; but inasmuch as it was well known that connivance was invariably purchased by the trader at no inconsiderable price, the freebooter might argue, as a salve to his conscience, if indeed his conscience ever chafed on such occasions, that this collusion, so far from mending the matter, only made it worse for the other side. It proved that the Spanish official's moral record in the case was even more blurred than his own; since he himself only fleeced the trader, while the official not only did this, but fleeced his sovereign to boot, and that, too, while professing for him the most "intense loyalty."

Thus does man stray widely from the right path so soon as he repudiates the guidings of conscience. Once arrived at that melancholy point when he is fain to justify his own misdeeds by the mere citation of similar or even worse misdeeds of those around him, with the view of a comparison favorable to himself, there comes a speedy end to his moral sense.

These bold mosstroopers, though to the last degree impatient of all the restraints of law, could not long endure the complete state of anarchy in which they at first found themselves,—every man acting for himself. They, therefore, soon organized, by selecting a leader, who appointed his subordinates, and established his outposts and

his headquarters,—the last not expected to be permanent, but to be shifted according to convenience, or as emergencies should arise.

Their trespasses they confined almost entirely to Spanish and Mexican traders. In fact, there were exceedingly few Americans who followed here the vocation of trading, and these few scarcely ever suffered by such depredations, from the fact, that the government to which they owed allegiance was held by the robbers in more wholesome dread than that of Spain.

Soon after they had fairly begun to show their hand, the Spanish force, stationed on the west bank of the Sabine, crossed over and essayed the difficult task of expelling them from the neutral limits. Being, however, sometimes boldly met, and at other times ambuscaded amid the tangled growth of the country, with disastrous result to themselves, they gave over the attempt.

At length, on some American citizens being maltreated at their hands, a detachment of United States troops was dispatched in pursuit of the offenders. But they were nowhere to be found: the whole clan had vanished as effectually and mysteriously as if some Roderick Dhu had waved them back to their sylvan fastnesses; and although the troops swept the whole territory,—burning their houses and fixtures,—they necessarily left the Ishmaelites themselves unscathed.

Only a brief time elapsed before they were fixed as comfortably as ever, though not in precisely the same localities,—the poor trader having meanwhile suffered even more than before their punishment; for now they had not only to provide for their present wants, but were also under the necessity of replacing their property which had been destroyed by the military; and it was on the traders' possessions alone that they would deign to draw for this purpose.

The commander of the United States forces repeated this summary vengeance two or three times; but finding that their habitations, which were mostly of the flimsiest kind, sprang up again as if by magic, and were refitted and refurnished solely at the poor trader's expense, he resolved to abandon the attempt,—at least as long as they should confine their irregular levies to citizens of other countries than his own; which, henceforward, for a long time, they were careful to do.

Under these circumstances, the only method promising safety to the trader, was, to procure, at his own private expense, the services of an armed escort through the Neutral Ground. The Spanish troops, having already had a rather bitter experience in their several attempts to restrain the free action of those redoubtable heroes, usually declined the honor of escorting,—unless, indeed, on such terms as the trader could but ill afford; the amount demanded for their services, together with the bribe claimed by the corrupt Spanish official, for his connivance at smuggling—which it really was—being so exorbitant as not only to consume all the profits, but to encroach very materially on the capital invested.

The only really available plan, therefore, left for the trader was, to apply to the United States commandant at Natchitoches for an escort. There were always some dashing young officers at the post, who were willing to undertake this business by turns, to relieve the monotony of garrison life on the frontier, as well as for the sake of the adventure, and the dangers with which it was spiced. These unsubstantial considerations were the officers' sole reward; though it was usually understood that the trader should, to a reasonable extent, remunerate the men out of his profits.

It may, however, be here stated, that neither the officer

nor his men regarded the smuggler as occupying a place in the moral scale any great distance above the pirates, from whose clutches they volunteered to protect him; and, in the event of a collision, it could hardly be expected they would show any great stomach for the fight, should there chance to be considerable odds against them, particularly if their *protégés*—as they almost invariably did—should take the precaution to hide their own precious bodies away in some safe place, while the exciting sport was being indulged in.

The messenger spoken of in the commencement of this chapter, had made his ride across the Neutral Ground during the night wholly from prudential motives. He well knew—as also did those who sent him—that the enterprising denizens thereof, should they discover him *in transitu*, would introduce themselves to him without form or ceremony, and force him to partake, for at least several hours, of their peculiar hospitality, of which they were exceedingly lavish so long as the fit was on them.

Their usual mode of entertaining under such circumstances was to commence with interrogatories, few in number, but very much to the point. In case of recusancy on the part of the guest, he was suspended, first by the thumbs, then by the great toes, and finally, should these methods fail to bring out what they had good reason to believe was in him, by the neck. The queries propounded on such occasions usually related to transactions in specie or bullion, in the movements of which these “bulls” and “bears” of the forest seemed to take quite as intense an interest as do the corresponding city brutes of the present day, who, by the way, for aught that appears to the contrary, may be their lineal descendants.

The Mexican rode up to a vacant lot opposite the commandant's headquarters, and dismounting, hitched his mule

and disburdened him of the huge saddle. Rightly judging that there was no hope of seeing, at so unseasonable an hour, the functionary whom he sought, he next set about eating his breakfast, his night-long ride having doubtless given a keen edge to his appetite. This breakfast consisted of a few *tortillas*, as the Mexicans call them, a peculiar sort of corn-cake, heavy and unsavory, which he fished from his pocket.

The mule, whose appetite may well be presumed to have been quite as keen as his rider's, not getting anything to eat now, and apparently expecting nothing until he should get back to the Sabine, some thirty miles distant, quietly lay down to take a rest. His master soon followed his example, curling himself up on his blanket, which he spread near the patient quadruped, using the saddle as a pillow. So there, side by side, the one having had nothing at all to eat, the other as near to nothing as may well be, they both fell asleep. The mule, like the true philosopher that he seemed, no doubt considered this, with the single exception of eating, — which was, in his own case at least, quite out of the question, — about as well as could be done when suffering the pangs of hunger.

One of the most astonishing things to Americans who have sojourned among Mexicans is the small quantity, as well as the poor quality, of food which the lower classes of that people consume. They seem to be content and even to thrive on a diet that would bring an American to death's door. This extreme temperance on the part of the Mexican results, doubtless, from his being too lazy to earn more by labor than will barely supply his physical necessities, while on the other hand there is no doubt that his more mercurial neighbor eats twice as much as is good for him.

But while the abstemiousness of the Mexican man is astonishing, that of his humble servant the Mexican mule

is little short of miraculous. He is caught feeding about as seldom as the august emperor of Cathay, and appears to live, like the ichneumon, by means of his lungs,—his stomach, if not an altogether useless appendage, being designed only as the receptacle of such articles as no other graminivorous animal will deign to touch.

The Mexican was at length roused from his slumbers by the braying of the mule, who having risen from the ground, took this method of announcing his readiness to go back to the Sabine and get his breakfast.

The sun by this time was two or three hours above the horizon, and the man, starting to his elbow at the discordant sound made by the animal, and seeing the commandant's office open, gave a great yawn, rose to his feet, shook himself, donned his ragged *sombrero*, and with his long matted hair standing out from beneath it in every direction, walked lazily across the street and disappeared within the open door.

CHAPTER II.

Sir, we are undone: these are the villains
That all the travellers do fear so much.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

If this letter move him not, his legs cannot. — *Twelfth Night.*

His incensement at this moment is so implacable that satisfaction can be none but by pangs of death and sepulchre. — *Twelfth Night.*

AMONG the officers of the Natchitoches garrison at this time, the fall of 1811, was Lieutenant Augustus Magee, who is said to have been remarkable for his military talents, as well as for his energy of character and his in-

trepidity. Happening to be in the office when the commandant read the note which the Mexican handed him, asking for an escort, the lieutenant forthwith volunteered to undertake the service. His offer was at once accepted; and in less than an hour he was galloping westward from the town, followed by half a dozen soldiers, together with the bearer of the note, who, despite his vigorous efforts to urge on his lank and graceless Rosinante — with the vision constantly before him of the grim outlaws that might cut him off should he fail to keep pace with the rest, — was obliged to fall far to the rear.

The lieutenant found the Mexicans bivouacked at a place called Salitre Prairie, on the Spanish side of the Sabine. Next morning at an early hour he started with his convoy for Natchitoches.

There was one piece of information regarding this convoy of which Magee was not apprised, — the great amount, namely, of silver which was stowed away upon its dozen *aparejos*, or pack-saddles. It would no doubt, as the matter ended, have been greatly to the interest of the traders had they imparted this secret to the commandant; for in that case Magee would most probably have brought with him a much more numerous escort. But it was a part of their standing policy to let no such precious secrets leak out, not even to the *arrieros*, or muleteers, who accompanied them throughout the entire route. On the contrary, lest such rumor might reach the acute ears of the Neutralians despite all honest precautions, they did not hesitate, when approaching the dangerous locality, to resort to downright lying, letting drop certain expressions, as if by sheer accident, to the effect that their commodities were of unusually poor quality.

It is nevertheless true that the men of the Neutral

Ground generally knew, in spite of these precautions, or perhaps sometimes by reason of them, when anything promising much in the way of booty entered their territory. Peradventure they had the same kind of "instinct" with regard to it which enabled Falstaff to recognize the disguised prince. So often, indeed, did they pounce upon the silver-laden trains, to the neglect of the less valuable ones, that it would seem the traditional "little bird," which at times favors even the most abandoned of human beings, had had his eye on the treasure from the time it was dug out of the bowels of Mexico until it reached their borders, when he would fly across and sing to them—not in green-backs, but—in silvery notes, on which hint they would act.

Be all this as it may, the party had scarcely got one third the distance to Natchitoches before it was but too obvious that a transfer of the property to other hands had become indispensable. This transfer took place in an incredibly short space of time, within the horse-shoe bend of a little creek called La Nan. The officer and his men, sauntering leisurely along, perhaps with too implicit faith in the terror inspired by the great American name, had just crossed the stream. When the traders had fairly entered the heel of the horse-shoe,—a contented band of brothers, surrounded by their worldly possessions,—a score of armed men suddenly advanced from the bank of the creek, and getting between the train and the guard in front, fired a few shots, though probably with no intention of hurting any one, since no one was struck.

Magee of course glanced back on hearing these ominous reports in his rear; and although he saw at once that he was greatly outnumbered by foes whose bravery he could not question, would have made fight. In fact, he had faced his men about with this view. Just then, however, he saw with chagrin every Mexican, instead of attempting

to use the arms with which he was amply provided, leap, or rather tumble, from his saddle, and throw himself flat and prone upon the ground, — a course which, as the lieutenant had before heard, was habitually resorted to by the citizens of Mexico when surprised by robbers, and which is even yet an every-day occurrence in that country, the object of the peculiar procedure being not only to signify their entire submission, but also that they would not even so much as look at their plunderers, and consequently would not be able to identify them to the authorities.

The brave officer, not a little disgusted by this come-put-your-foot-on-my-neck conduct of those who doubtless hoped even at that moment that he would defend their perishing property, as well as their miserable, cringing, crouching bodies, wheeled his horse indignantly, with a contemptuous expression on his face, and followed by his little squad, galloped back to Natchitoches.

The robbers at once secured their plunder and hid it under the bank of the adjoining creek; and after declaring that their “bank of La Nan,” as they called it with grim facetiousness, was closed for the present, went on their several ways to await events. They very naturally supposed that the amount lost was large enough to excite vigorous efforts for its recovery, as well as for the punishment of the depredators themselves. Not the least of their fears was the apprehension that a crisis in their financial affairs might be precipitated by what they termed “a rush upon their newly established bank.”

It, however, very nearly came to pass that these apprehended efforts were not made at all. The Spanish authorities affected to regard the whole responsibility — if, indeed, there was any responsibility attaching to the protection of unlawful trade — as resting solely with the Americans, who had undertaken the safe conduct of this particular

treasure; and that it was they, if any, who should make amends.

On the other hand, the American commandant cared but little about the matter,—its only ugly feature being the precipitate flight of a United States officer without striking a blow; which, although really justifiable, under the circumstances, when fully explained, was liable to misinterpretation, unless redeemed by a return to the charge, or in some other way. He, however, regarded this question as entirely personal with Magee, whose courage he himself did not for a moment doubt. He simply thought that if his lieutenant could stand it, *he* could.

Magee on his part, had been so utterly disgusted by the cowardly conduct of those whom he had deigned to take under the eagle's wing, that the bare thought of returning to avenge their wrongs, or to restore their property, well-nigh nauseated him. He was fain to let the whole thing go just as it stood, and henceforth strove to dismiss it from his mind. The information which subsequently reached Natchitoches, of the immense amount of treasure contained in the packs, so far from bringing him regret for not having fought to save it, sent through his breast something very like a thrill of satisfaction that so much treasure had passed from such craven hands into those of men who, whatever their shortcomings, had at least bravery to commend them.

The whole matter was in a fair way to terminate just here. Unfortunately, however, a few days afterwards, Magee, on entering his room, which fronted on the street, found, pushed under the door, a note, which he forthwith read, and found that it was to the following effect:

“LA NAN, *Sept. 3d*, 1811.

“LIEUT. MAGEE:—As I have business in town to-day, I will write you a few lines before leaving for that point, so that, in

case I shall be prevented, by your absence, from conferring with you, I may leave at your office the substance of what I have to say.

“If your valuable services can be spared by your Government, I should like, of all things, to engage them for a season in a business for which I know, from recent representation, you are peculiarly fitted.

“We of the Neutral Ground, as you are probably aware, support ourselves (quite liberally too — so you need not decline my offer for fear of non-payment) by contributions levied on those rascally smugglers who infest our territory, and even threaten, at times, to corrupt its morals. Now, if you will only contract to act as permanent escort to those yellow-bellies, we can amass fortunes off of them in a short time, and you shall go snacks with us.

“Having every reason to think you will accept my offer, I shall proceed just as though the bargain was closed betwixt us, and give you some wholesome instructions. When you are escorting a treasure of unusual value, on approaching a point which affords peculiar facilities for an ambuscade, be sure to push on with your guard a considerable distance ahead of the convoy, and, as soon as two or three of us show ourselves, take your sabre in your hand and your heart in your mouth, instructing your men to do the same, and make off, quite out of the way, as if for dear life, — thus leaving the coast entirely clear for us to operate at our leisure.

“However, as I had the pleasure of hearing of your rare performances only a few days ago in this vicinity, which redounded so much to our advantage, any further directions could avail but little; and even those given above are perhaps superfluous. In fact, you played so beautifully into our hands on that occasion, that some of my boys make no doubt you expected the offer which I have just made you would follow as a matter of course. In other and plainer words, they think you acted as you did for the express purpose of securing said offer. I, however, choose to differ with them, and hope you will excuse me for saying, that I think it was sheer cowardice that carried you so rapidly from the scene.

"Had this not been my view of the case, I should never have ventured to make you this offer. We must have, for this business, such an arrant coward that he cannot possibly come up to the sticking point, however much his honor and his reputation may be staked on it; and I am convinced you can no more tarry in the face of danger, than night at the coming of the sun. So, you are the man for our money,—if, as I said before, your Government can only be induced to dispense with your valuable services.

"Hoping that you will soon report in person,

"I have the honor to be

"Your humble servant,

"GATEWOOD."

"'Report in person'?" exclaimed Magee, rising from his seat with tremendous energy. "I will, by ——!"

I omit the oath, in consideration of the fact that the lieutenant was but little addicted to the utterance of profane language,—hoping that the reader, if he cannot quite pardon his isolated offence, will at least allow it to have been materially extenuated by the circumstances which called it forth.

Magee went straight to the commandant. Without allusion to the letter from the lord of the Neutral Ground, and without betraying a sign of any unusual excitement, he asked for twenty men, to do battle with the Ishmaelites. That functionary—although surprised at his request, now that the whole thing had settled down into comparative quiet—made no inquiry into the subject, but readily granted the detachment, with the additional favor that he might pick his men.

CHAPTER III.

Seeing his reputation touch'd to death,
He did oppose his foe.—*Timon of Athens.*

I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you.—*Twelfth Night.*

Will either of you bear me a challenge to him? —*Twelfth Night.*

MAGEE got his men together that same evening; and, after explaining his object, and telling them they must expect no child's play, gave orders that their arms should be put in perfect condition, and appointed the place of rendezvous, and the time of meeting at daybreak next morning.

He met them at the hour named, and they started on their expedition. As soon as they were fairly beyond the outskirts of the town, he halted his little command at a suitable spot, and drawing forth the insolent epistle, read it to them without any comment whatever. In selecting his men, he had been careful to embrace all who were with him on the unfortunate occasion of which the letter treated. On hearing the contents of the communication, all were made very indignant at the charge of cowardice, which they knew to be wholly unmerited, and in very emphatic terms expressed their determination to prove the contrary, to the satisfaction even of the maligner himself, if they could but come up with him.

It was not long before an opportunity — though not altogether a fair one — presented, for the relative test of mettle. After going a few miles, they met an unlucky pedestrian, who had been overhauled by the outlaws. They had robbed him, he said, of a valuable horse, but had

taken nothing from his person. This man, an American, on learning the object of the expedition, became at once eager to guide the squad to the point where, about an hour before, he had involuntarily ceased to be an equestrian. He said there were about fifty of them bivouacked around a spring; that they had no guards out; and that they could be easily surprised.

This was all very good news to Magee, and his men heard it with almost equal satisfaction. The Lieutenant would have preferred a less disparity of force; for his intention was, if he could have met Gatewood with anything like equal numbers, to make a fair hand-to-hand fight, hoping himself to engage that redoubtable chief in single combat, and wash out, with his blood, the base stigma which the latter had essayed to cast upon his good name — or perish in the attempt. Inasmuch, however, as they so greatly outnumbered his force, it would have been sheer madness to attempt anything but a surprise, and that about as complete as it could be made.

The very helpless condition in which the brigands, usually so vigilant, were found, arose probably from the fact that they had every reason to think the retributive storm lately expected to burst upon them, had, by this time, blown quietly over. At any rate, so defenceless did they appear to Magee, when he first caught sight of them — strolling, and lying at random, about the woods, some talking and laughing, a few of them asleep, the greater part at a distance from their arms — that, although his first impulse was to order the discharge of a deadly volley into their midst, his feelings revolted at what seemed to be little better than a cold-blooded butchery. He therefore — in consideration, too, of their having forborne to fire into his squad, at La Nan, under circumstances somewhat similar, which they might easily have

done had they been at all blood-thirsty — after dismounting his men, ordered them to charge, without firing, unless there was fair prospect of resistance, — but to capture as many as possible.

The freebooters were taken so completely by surprise, that they at once rushed off into the tangled growth around, every man for himself, — most of them without so much as taking their arms with them. About a dozen, under threat of being shot down, stayed their headlong course and were secured as prisoners.

Had resistance been made, and blood shed on both sides, it is probable Magee would not have adopted the course which he now did. But so disappointed was he at not having a fight with these bandits, — but more especially at the escape of their leader, who, after branding him as a coward, did not see fit to tarry long enough to allow him an opportunity to prove the reverse, — that, as a vent to his feelings, — or, peradventure, as a salve to them, — he ordered his men to strip the prisoners, tie them up to the various surrounding trees, and whip them in order to make them divulge the hiding-place of the stolen silver. This order the men obeyed with a will, hoping probably for a liberal share of the treasure.

Whether this was justifiable or not, it was, to say the worst, only fighting the devil with his own weapons, — since this identical mode had often been resorted to by these same prisoners, when they were fain to extort disclosures of a kindred character from such wayfaring wights as were unfortunate enough to fall into their clutches.

This flagellation failing to elicit the desired information, he next, with the same view, directed a live coal to be passed along their naked backs divers times. Still they kept firm hold of their secret, not divulging a single scrap of information bearing in any way whatever on the question

propounded; and although they made but little moan during the proceeding, threats of vengeance were written in black lines on their writhing faces far more clearly than if traced with ink.

It must here be made known that the Lieutenant was not at all dilatory in his attempt to settle this little account with the freebooters. Knowing full well that, should he tarry long in these sylvan abodes, the tables might be completely turned on him, — and that, too, with a vengeance, — he dispatched the business in hand with his usual energy.

Struck with admiration, perhaps, at their unflinching fortitude, he thought at first of releasing about half of them. Considering it his bounden duty, however, to make a signal example of them in a more public way than he had already done by means of his improvised inquisition, he concluded to take them with him to Natchitoches, to be tried by the civil authorities. — Their trial soon resulted in their being safely lodged in the penitentiary.

This little raid of Magee's turned out much better than there was any good reason to expect; for, although it was not the policy of the Neutralians to fight under ordinary circumstances, if they could well avoid it, yet had that officer found them on the alert, they would probably have worsted him in the conflict, even with equal numbers. They were a band of brave men — many of them recklessly so — who not only were well acquainted with all the intricacies of their stronghold, but who thoroughly understood that peculiar mode of fighting, since designated as bushwhacking, and with which — as it is not embraced in any work on tactics — neither regular soldiers nor their officers could be expected to be very conversant.

Notwithstanding his triumph over the powers of the Neutral Ground, Magee continued to chafe under the charge of personal cowardice, which Gatewood had so insolently

preferred against him. So that, a day or two after his affair with the brigands, he indited to that leader a note of the following purport:

“NATCHITOCHES, *Sept. 11th, 1811.*

“CAPTAIN GATEWOOD: I did myself the honor to call on you the other day, to ‘report for duty,’ as you requested. Just at the precise moment, however, when I rode up to your headquarters, and had every reason to expect a warm reception, you had such a press of business in the opposite direction, and started off at such a rapid rate to attend to it, that I found it impossible to come up to you, although I spared no effort to do so.

“Inasmuch, however, as I don’t think it well to allow my aspirations to be quenched by a single failure, I hope you may find it perfectly convenient to name to my friend, who will hand you this, a time and place when and where we *may* meet.

“Your ob’t serv’t,

“AUGUSTUS W. MAGEE,

“1st Lieut. U. S. A.”

Here was a cartel of mortal defiance ready to be hurled at the grim chieftain of the Neutral Ground, who had the name among his followers of being the best swordsman and pistol-shot in the whole south-western country.

The difficulty was now to get conveyance for the note; for it may well be believed that few men would be willing thus to beard the lion in his den. Magee carried the note in his pocket a whole day, during which time he solicited several of his brother officers—separately and privately, of course—for a favor in that line. They all, after some initiatory hemming and hawing, intimated that he would be degrading himself to fight with a robber, whose proper place was the penitentiary; that he had better let the matter drop; together with much other advice of the same tenor; and invariably wound up by respectfully but firmly declining the honor.

As a last resort, he applied to the second lieutenant of his company, whose interest it obviously was to bring the combatants together, since he would go up a step, should the other "go up the spout." This officer also refusing to act, even more emphatically than the others — perhaps for the very reason that it was his interest *not* to refuse — Magee became greatly exercised as to the course he should adopt.

A day's incubation over the matter, however, hatched out a plan, which, desperate though it seemed, he resolved to attempt at once. Relying upon the probability that he was not well enough known to Gatewood, or to any of his men, to be recognized by them, if disguised, — they having, so far as he knew, never yet seen him, except at a distance, — he determined to deliver the challenge himself, as Lieutenant Magee's friend. Accordingly, after cutting off his beard and much of his long hair, he put aside his uniform, and donning citizen's dress, set off, alone, in quest of his foe; having first obtained from the commandant the necessary verbal leave of absence, with the gratuitous remark, thrown out as a blind, that he was going to take a little jaunt into the country, by way of variety.

CHAPTER IV.

Though I cannot be said to be a flattering honest man, it must not be denied that I am a plain-dealing villain. — *Much Ado About Nothing*.

My life upon't young though thou art, thine eye
Hath stay'd upon some favor that it loves. — *Twelfth Night*.

I am glad at heart
To be so rid o' the business. — *Winter's Tale*.

AFTER a long search in that vicinity where the headquarters of the bandits were reported to be, Magee came within full sight of the camp, at the same time that he was halted by a sentinel, whom he had descried from a distance, through the trees, pacing to and fro.

This camp, called Camp Wildwood, embraced two or three dozen tents, pitched with but little regard to order, in the wood, at a point where it had been made open by the careful clearing away of the undergrowth. The men were engaged in all conceivable modes of both action and inaction. Some were lounging on the ground, sleeping, or smoking, or listlessly whiling away their time in the enjoyment of such day-dreams as might arise without any exertion on their part to beget them. One or two groups were sitting on their blankets, spread beneath the trees, betting excitedly over a game of poker, or seven up, — several bystanders looking as intently over their shoulders as though life hung on the result. In front of one of the tents a trim-looking youth was sitting on a log, sawing from a fiddle some "double-quick" tune, while two other men, his exact opposites in appearance, were hard at work on a "ho-

down," kicking up in his face dust enough, one might suppose, not only to clog the instrument, but to choke the performer to death. Another musician, apparently more disposed to solitude, was sitting apart under a sort of natural bower fantastically formed by a trailing vine, indulging in flute exercise, the soft tones floating pleasantly in upon the discordant scene. One was kindling a fire, probably for cooking the mid-day meal, as a companion was slicing a few pieces from the fresh skinned carcass of a bear suspended from a limb near at hand. Here one was re-stretching the ropes of his tent, which had become too slack. Hard by him, another was tanning a deer-skin by the Indian process, — that is, by smoking it underground; a small hole being dug for the purpose. Yonder, a half-dozen whooping, rollicking fellows seemed to be having a good time over a demijohn. They would now and then attempt snatches of song, but their tongues having become quite too thick for harmonious utterance, — if, indeed, when at their best, they had any music in their souls, — the attempt would end in a universal shout, intended probably as a chorus, and the performers themselves being the judges, no doubt answering every purpose as such.

Yonder move two young women, once pretty, doubtless, but having now a hardened cast of countenance. Each bears a rude basket on her arm, containing clothing for men, or some handiwork, the result of her own industry. They are the mistresses or wives of some of the men, and have just come in from the shanties, — where they are kept, a mile or two from the camp, — with the hope of selling these trifles. Though the men, as they sauntered along, were by no means choice either in their language, or in the substance of what they said, or of the jokes they cracked with them, their cheeks seemed callous, and showed no tinge of either shame or indignation.

There were a few horses tied to limbs or saplings in various parts of the woods, while dogs of all degrees of hybridity, some the better and others evidently the worse for the mixture, were stretched about the premises, or were snuffing among the leaves for the remains of their masters' last feast.

Such was the varied scene of which Magee caught a bird's-eye view as he passed along.

"I wish to see your leader," said he, by way of reply to a stern demand from the guard before mentioned, for the watchword. "I have some important business with him," he added, seeing that his confronter hesitated.

The latter now gave a shrill whistle, as he did so turning his face in the direction of an extensive area, where the undergrowth, not having been cleared away, was so dense that, at the distance of a few paces from the margin, it was impenetrable to the eye. Almost immediately a boy, in response, stepped from the edge of the copse; but on a mysterious motion of the sentry's hand, and without a word being said by either party, he disappeared at the exact spot whence he had emerged. The guard then resumed his monotonous tramp up and down between the great forest-trees that surrounded them on all sides.

Presently a dapper little man came forth from the interior of the thicket.

"If that's Gatewood," muttered Magee to himself, as he still sat on his horse, "he's not much like the descriptions I have heard of him."

As this man drew near, there was displayed such a degree of energy in all his movements, and there was so much fire in his eye, that by the time he opened his lips to speak, his diminutive form had dilated to quite respectable proportions.

"Can I be permitted to see Captain Gatewood?" asked

Magee in his impatience, while the other was still several steps distant.

"I will report to the Captain whatever you have to say."

"That cannot be, since what I have to say concerns no one here but him and myself."

"Private matters, eh? and not to be intrusted to *any* one?" said the other, tapping his breast with his hand, — a motion which plainly said, "I am his next in command."

"Entirely private," returned Magee, "and not to be entrusted to any one else whatsoever."

"Step this way, then."

The American officer, now dismounting, secured his horse and followed his guide, who led the way along the margin of the thick growth already referred to, without entering it. When they had gone about far enough around it to describe a semicircle, they came to a small opening in the mysterious hedge, which served as an entrance. Through this, and past the sentinel who guarded it, the guide made his way, Magee following close on his heels. From the interior all the brushwood had been cleared away to the extent of about a quarter of an acre, leaving enough of the hedgelike growth on the outer margin to screen the interior completely from the gaze of outsiders.

A tent stood between two immense oaks, near a little rill which meandered on its noiseless way, while at the distance of about ten paces were two smaller tents, which seemed at the present moment to be vacant.

Passing around to the front of the largest tent, past an empty hammock swung to the trees, they came abruptly on a man who was half reclining upon a bear-skin spread on the ground, with a dog beside him, and was intently examining a file of newspapers, probably just received from "the States." He was habited in an elaborately embroidered suit of buckskin. On the approach of the two visitors, the

dog raised his head and uttered a low growl. On hearing this his master looked in the direction indicated by the watchful brute, and, perceiving the two so near, immediately rose to receive them. As he did so, his large symmetrical form was brought into full view; and it was evident at the first glance that he was a man of no common strength and activity, and withal, from a certain wiriness of build, that he possessed an endurance almost unbounded. His head was uncovered, and his hair, now in some disorder, was as black as the raven's plumage, while his large eyes were scarcely less so. They were evidently such eyes as can express the fiercer or softer feelings at will, though on this occasion there was visible in them as yet a predominance of neither, but only a sort of cool indifference blended with some doubt, and it may have been with a very slight degree of surprise at the sudden intrusion. The general smoothness of his exposed brow, which was both broad and high, showed plainly that he had not passed his prime. A single deep furrow between his eyes indicated the occasional workings of the darker passions. These could probably have been read more clearly in lines around the mouth, had that feature been visible; but it was ambushed in a heavy moustache, while beard of a dark-brown color, very fine, and as glossy as silk, waved beneath it in great luxuriance, and completed the mask of the lower portion of his face.

Magee's guide, as soon as he had brought him fairly under the observation of the Chief, withdrew; and, as the beat of the sentinel who guarded the entrance was at a considerable distance, the brief conversation which now took place in subdued tones, could not be overheard.

Gatewood motioned the stranger to sit down on a log, which lay near his bear-skin, and which, as it had been stripped of bark and squared on the upper side, was no doubt intended to serve as a bench.

"Thank you," said Magee.

Without, however, availing himself of the invitation to be seated, he drew from his pocket the note which the reader has already seen, and handed it to Gatewood, who forthwith commenced reading it.

During the short time of its perusal, Magee was engaged in wondering whether a tremendous explosion would follow, and if so, how tremendous it would probably be, and of what precise manner and with what result.

As soon as Gatewood had finished, he raised his eyes, — which flashed a trifle, — scrutinized for an instant the face before him, and then quietly remarked, glancing again at the note :

"As Lieutenant Magee is guilty of an irregularity, in not saying here who his friend is, I presume he himself is no stickler for the code. *I* certainly am not. So, instead of writing a reply, I will just rely upon your letting him know that I shall be happy to meet him, with small swords, at the crossing of the Arroyo Honda, to-morrow, when the shadows are exactly with the road, which, there, runs directly east and west. I keep no time-piece."

Magee slightly bowed assent.

"For reasons best known to myself," added the Chief, after looking down a moment, as though reflecting, "I will commit the further irregularity of bringing no second with me. In this respect, Lieutenant Magee can do as best suits him."

"I doubt not," replied Magee, "these arrangements will meet with the Lieutenant's entire approbation."

With a polite bow, Magee now took himself off; while the Chief, having returned the parting salutation in kind, lay down again on the bear-skin and resumed the inspection of his late file — a treat seldom attainable on that wild frontier.

Scarcely had the officer turned his back on the Chief's headquarters, when he met, going in that direction, a girl, apparently not more than fourteen, who had at that moment entered the opening in the hedge. She was attended by a very large dog, and seemed to be just from the woods, since she bore on one arm several wreaths of delicate wild vines, twined with exquisite taste, while in the other hand she carried a beautifully arranged bouquet of forest-flowers. The face struck him as being a very lovely one, yet so sad that he looked into it with a mingled feeling of admiration and pity. She was a brunette, of about medium height, with regular features and large dark eyes. Her long black hair, slightly wavy, completely veiled her shoulders and her back as far as the slender waist. Her person was arrayed with a good deal of taste, and she wore a gipsy hat.

As they met, she shied a little from the path, and looked timidly up at the stranger from her soft eyes—he shying quite as far in the opposite direction, to avoid the formidable looking animal at her heels, which, however, passed him in silence and without even deigning to notice him in any way.

Being still but a few steps from the tent he had just left, he could not resist the temptation to look back and see how she would be received by the grim lord of these wild demesnes. He expected to witness a cold repulse, should she venture near him—though he did not for a moment suppose she *would* venture near him.

She walked carelessly up to his side and threw at his feet the wreaths and flowers she had gathered; whereupon he half rose from his position, and putting his great brawny arm gently around her fragile form, drew her down by his side and kissed her, while she nestled her sweet face—now beaming with smiles—in his broad bosom.

“Powers of the blest!” exclaimed Magee, as he went on

his way; "what a place for a girl! and *such* a girl! May heaven shield her, whether sweetheart, daughter, or wife. She is too much unlike for his daughter. And what could such a man want with a wife? Why he could n't brook Hymen's chains for a day. She must be ——. It makes me shudder! God preserve her from harm! from further harm, I mean. I already half repent of having challenged him. What would become of her, should he fall?"

"I got through with it pretty well," thought Magee, as he mounted and rode off. "I would rather, however, he had chosen pistols, though he has no advantage over me with the sword other than his great strength must give him. In skill of fence, I hold myself his equal; and in activity, I ——. Look well to your laurels, man!"

As Magee rode back to town, he congratulated himself more than once on his success in preserving his incognito.

"Had that savage recognized me," thought he, "I don't suppose I should ever have been heard of again in native land. But with such a change wrought in my countenance, to say nothing of my dress, I don't believe my best friends would know me at a little distance."

Such were his meditations as he entered Natchitoches about sunset.

"Yonder comes Overton," he continued, still in thought, as he saw the commandant coming down the main street of the town, taking his usual evening walk a little distance into the country. "I'll just test the matter on *him*."

"There! I was certain he would not know me."

By this time, they had fairly passed each other without a sign of recognition on the Colonel's part. But the latter's grave, imperturbable look—so foreign to the occasion—as he stared blankly into his intimate friend's face, struck Magee in such a ridiculous light, that his gravity was quite upset; and although he was fain to pass on unrecognized,

he had to laugh, and that so loud as to draw the other's attention.

"Why, Colonel!" he said, as they both now turned about, "when did you learn to pass an old friend with all the concentrated solemnity of an owl?"

"Pray, when did *you* learn Proteus's trick of transformation?" retorted the Colonel, as he recognized his subaltern, more by his voice than by any remains he could, even now, see of the original.

"But, Magee, what in the devil have you been doing out in *this* direction? When you said you were going to take a little jaunt, I, of course, thought you meant eastwardly. I know you can have no further business with those Neutral-Ground folks; and as for pleasure, I don't exactly see how a man can ride, for pleasure, through a country where the fingers of two or three hundred such savages are itching for his scalp."

"Oh, they would n't recognize me, Colonel. At least, *you* have no reason to think so," said Magee, with a laugh.

"True," replied the commandant, slightly echoing his friend's mirth. "But tell me, did you see any of them?"

"Well, yes; but at such a distance, that I did n't think it worth while to disturb them."

"I should rather think not."

"But by being absent, Magee," the commandant went on, "you have missed the news. The town has been in a ferment all day."

"Why?"

"Why, just after you left, about a dozen refugees reached here, from Mexico. The revolution there has failed, for the time, — probably for all time, — and the rebels are flying from the bloody vengeance of the victors."

"Do those who have reached here seem to be persons of any note?"

"Yes. One of them, Bernardo, was a general in the patriot army, I believe. He is certainly an untiring fellow in the cause. He has been here only a few hours, and I really think he has sounded all the officers of the post except yourself, touching their sympathies with the patriot cause. And he'll be after *you*, as soon as you dismount."

"Ah, we all have 'sympathies' with them, as you know."

"Yes—and that's about as far as we should be willing to go. But Bernardo wants more substantial aid than that amounts to. A sprinkling of the Anglo-Saxon element in their armies is what is really needed; and he seems fully aware of the fact."

"But, Magee," added the commandant, — looking scrutinizingly at the other as though expecting to see in his face something he wished not there, — "who's fool enough to resign a commission under such a government as ours, for the purpose of accepting one in a cause that is going to pieces after a six months' struggle? Be on your guard: he's a very insinuating fellow, and will spare no pains to seduce you."

With this parting admonition, the Colonel resumed his walk; while his lieutenant rode on towards the central portion of the town.

CHAPTER V.

From point to point now have you heard
The fundamental reasons of this war.

All's Well That Ends Well.

Holy seems the quarrel
Upon your grace's part, — black and fearful
On the opposers. *All's Well That Ends Well.*

THE commandant's prediction was fully verified. The close of the day found Bernardo and Magee in conference at the latter's quarters. The room was very large, and a rather shabby one. The walls were as innocent of pictures—even the commonest prints—as the windows were of curtains. There was no carpet on the floor of the apartment, and it was but scantily furnished with a few chairs standing about in disorder, while a small table, on which were a few books and some scattered newspapers, together with writing materials, occupied the centre. At opposite sides of this little table, the two gentlemen were seated.

With the Lieutenant's personal appearance the reader is already, in a measure, acquainted. Bernardo was a middle-aged man, much above the average size. His complexion did not indicate a pure Spanish descent, but a very slight mixture with some one of the darker races of Mexico. He had a remarkably intelligent face, and a graceful and easy deportment; was evidently a man of rare mental endowments, and on his address, the fascination of his manner became at once apparent.

They had probably been in conference for some time.

"Now, General," Magee was just then saying in his own tongue,—for Bernardo understood and spoke English perfectly,—“the matter stands thus: As the authorized agent of your party, you have proffered me terms more flattering, I must confess, than I could have expected. You have also stated, in a general way, the prospects of your party; and, so far as I can judge, they seem to promise ultimate success. But before I can give up a position under my own government, on which I depend for a livelihood, and which affords me many opportunities for scientific advancement, as well as other important advantages, it is but natural I should require a more detailed account of your affairs. And, first of all,—is your *cause* a good one?”

“If there ever has been a good cause, sir, since the creation of the world,” replied Bernardo, with enthusiasm, “*ours* is a good one. The tyranny of Spanish rule in Mexico, though it may have been paralleled, has certainly never been exceeded. But, that you may fully understand our grievances, suppose I recount them.”

“By all means, do so, General. I have paid but little attention to events in your country; and, in common with thousands of my fellow-citizens, know almost nothing about the policy pursued by Spain towards her American colonies.”

Bernardo then proceeded to give an account of the wrongs which Mexico had suffered for many years at the hands of the mother country. Inasmuch, however, as he entered into the full details of the matter, his recital would occupy entirely too much space to be given, verbatim, in a novel. I shall therefore content myself—and will, no doubt, by doing so, better satisfy my readers—with citing from the most reliable historians (mainly from Kennedy and Yoakum—the former an Englishman) such information on the subject as I deem essential to the intelligent perusal and proper appreciation of this story. These two writers, who

depicted the lamentable condition of things forty and fifty years, respectively, after they occurred, will not be so obnoxious to the reader's suspicion of magnifying the wrongs of the Mexicans as would Bernardo, fresh as he was from the horrible scenes of butchery and general diabolism enacted by the now triumphant royalists.

First, as regards the form of government.

"The Viceroy was at the head of the colonial government. He derived his commission immediately from the throne. The Council of the Indies, which sat at Madrid, and over which the king was presumed to preside—though he was seldom present in person—ruled the colonies absolutely in all branches of government,—military, ecclesiastical, civil, and commercial; that is, in all cases where they chose to exercise jurisdiction. These instances were, however, comparatively few; and its control was therefore mostly nominal, nearly the whole management of Mexican affairs being left to the colonial machinery. And this was of the most despotic character.

"The highest tribunal was the *Real Audencia*, or Royal Court,—a sort of legislative body, of which the viceroy was president. Its sessions were held in the city of Mexico. In each intendancy, or province,—of which there were seven in all,—was an inferior *audencia*. These courts were composed entirely of generals and bishops, all of whom were natives of Spain, and in whose selection the people had no voice whatever. Such government as these mixed and ecclesiastical military tribunals chose to give them, was all they had.

"In the town and villages, the offices of *alcalde*, or magistrate, and *regidor*, or chief, composed the *ayuntamiento*, or municipal council. These offices were mostly auctioned off, and the proceeds went into the royal treasury. Sometimes they were conferred as a reward of military service,—

the captain being made perpetual *alcalde*; the first and second lieutenants, *regidores*. The sergeant, or, in his absence, the corporal, or in his absence, some private, was made *procurador*, or town-clerk. As these were the only courts of petty jurisdiction, a corporal, or private sometimes, administered justice in villages composed of respectable proprietors—the *audencia* of the intendancy, the only tribunal for appeal, being often at a great distance, and a resort to it being always uncertain and vexatious, to say the least, even should just claims be established. Should an appeal fail to establish one's claims, however, he was ruined by the immense expense which it necessarily involved; the fees and perquisites wrung from every litigant by the government vampires being enormous.

“Mexico, in common with the other American colonies under the Spanish yoke, was enfeebled and barbarized by many years of profligate misrule. Corruption and speculation rioted openly in every department of the government, and clung to every branch of the executive, from the representative of the king to the meanest dependant of the customs. The fact that there were government offices to which no salary was attached, speaks volumes. Every office was publicly sold, with the exception of those that were bestowed upon court-minions as the reward of disgraceful service. Men destitute of talent, education, and character, were appointed to offices of the greatest responsibility in Church and State; and panders and parasites were forced upon America to superintend the finances, and preside in the supreme courts of appeal. For the colonists there was no respite from official bloodsuckers. Each succeeding swarm of adventurers, in their eagerness to indemnify themselves for the money expended in procuring their places, increased the calamities of the provinces already wasted by the cupidity of their predecessors. Truly might

the Hispano-American exclaim, 'That which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; that which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten.'

"The government strove by all the means in its power, and by every restriction that could be invented, short of driving them to desperation, to keep up the dependence of the people of Mexico upon the mother-country. The thousand ore-banks were forbidden to be touched. The innumerable herds of sheep were virtually forbidden to be shorn. Olive-orchards and vineyards were laid waste as soon as their existence was reported by the hordes of government spies that infested every nook and corner of the land, because, forsooth, all these things would have been brought into competition with those sent across the ocean by the pampered Cræsus of Spain.

"But of all the countless wrongs inflicted upon the Mexican people, the hardest to bear was the practice, continued for three centuries, of conferring all the lucrative offices on the hated Gachupins."

The original meaning of this term was simply, a native of Spain. In addition to this, it soon came to signify in the mouths of Mexicans, a cheat, — a thief, — a liar, — in short, it included almost every human attribute that was particularly mean; and in that sense was applied to such as, born in the mother-country, flocked to New Spain to live at the expense of Mexican Creoles. In other words, more easily understood by the reader of the present day, the Gachupins were the carpet-baggers of Mexico.

"Persons having no root in the soil were selected over those having ties of interest and kindred, in order to advance the dignity and aggrandizement of the mother-country. These Gachupins owned nearly all the wealth and wielded

all the territorial influence. Of the one hundred and sixty viceroys, and five hundred and ninety captain-generals, governors, and presidents of the *Real Audencia*, only eighteen were born in the country, and these were all reared and educated in Spain, and were appointed in European interests. Judges of the *Audencias* were *always* of European birth.

"All the prizes in the church, the army, the navy, as well as all the facilities for wealth and commerce, were clutched by the privileged caste. In vain did Creoles try to bring offenders of that class to justice. So far was this blind worship of native Spaniards carried, that the son of Spanish parents, born in Mexico, was held by his own father inferior to his European book-keeper.

"The fears of the tyrants lest the fires of revolution should be lighted, was so great, that by the laws of the Indies, which governed the supreme courts of Spanish America, it was made a capital crime for a foreigner to enter the territory without a special license from his Catholic Majesty; and so particularly apprehensive were they of the influence of citizens of the United States, that the captain-general of one of the internal provinces declared that, if he had it in his power to do so, he would prevent the very birds of the air from crossing the borders, lest some of the dreaded liberal principles might be concealed in their plumage and be diffused among the masses. Texas, one of the most lovely and most fertile countries on the globe, had hitherto been purposely kept as a wilderness, and even worse, that she might present a repulsive barrier between the Anglo-Saxon and the people of Mexico. The missions which were planted in Texas nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, under sanction of the government, by vagabond friars, aided and protected from the savages by the most abandoned of the Spanish soldiery, maintained

themselves until recently by the labors of the wretched Indians, whom they dragged from their haunts in the forest or prairie. Under the pretence of bringing them into the fold of the Church, they kept them in the most abject slavery; not only forcing them to constant labor for the benefit of their lazy masters, but wringing from them, by torture, an abjuration of their own religion, and a conformation to the rites of the holy Catholic Church. No officer or soldier could marry but by special license from his sovereign, and this the priests could easily turn into an interdict. This enforced abstinence from wedlock by all—priests, of course, included—prevented lawful increase, and produced, instead, a mestizo population. These communities of expatriated friars, unprincipled soldiers, enthralled and savage Indians, with the motley offspring of Mexican licentiousness, was well adapted to keep Texas a barrier against the Anglo-Saxon.”

But, with all these precautions, Texas could not be forever kept in the condition of a wilderness to serve a tyrant's purpose. And in the last year of the eighteenth century, came Nolan and his companions to prepare the way for better times.

Philip Nolan was an adventurous American, who was engaged ostensibly in bringing wild horses from Mexico and Texas, and disposing of them in the United States,—having obtained from the Spanish Governor of Louisiana the proper permit for that purpose. But that was a very small part of Nolan's object. It was, in fact, only a cloak to the chief end he had in view—to diffuse liberal notions among the Mexican masses, and to make ready the way for a revolution, which was to be inaugurated by a force from the United States, as soon as the malcontents in Mexico could be fully apprised of, and prepared for, the project. With a choice band of about twenty, he was engaged for several years in this dangerous business.

At length, in 1800, after sowing the seeds of liberty broadcast over a large portion of the land, his plans were divulged by some traitor. An overwhelming force was sent against him, and although surrounded on all sides, he made a gallant defence, in which he was slain. Several of his comrades were executed. The remainder, ten or twelve in number, were sentenced, some to dungeons; others to hard labor, for life, in mines in the interior of Mexico; and such of the latter as were living at the time of our story, were supposed to be still at work in those dreary caverns; the former, perhaps more fortunate, it was thought had perished long ago behind their hideous grates. But of these more anon.

Their brave leader was resting in his prairie grave, while the active ferment which he had insinuated was leavening the whole lump.

Nolan has, by many, been regarded as an unscrupulous adventurer, actuated solely by selfish motives. By them, his main object is represented as having been to amass a fortune,—or to make a name by his wild exploits. But whatever the incentive which moved him, his efforts tended, at least, to rouse the apathetic Mexicans to a sense of their degradation, and to enlighten them as to the means necessary for their regeneration. He may have been ambitious; he may even have been selfish; I do not know,—no one but his God can know at this late day,—and I choose, therefore, to cherish his memory as that of the earliest martyr to the disenthralment of the lovely and fertile province of Texas, from the heaviest tyranny that ever enchained a people.

For several years after Nolan's death, emissaries were secretly sent from the United States, by those who were then maturing a scheme for the invasion of Mexico, with the view of wresting it from Spain, and, it has been thought,

erecting it into a separate empire. In 1807, this scheme was brought to an abrupt termination by the arrest and trial of Aaron Burr, its acknowledged head.

But a potent element in the body politic of Mexico—an element which had hitherto remained passive—was about being exercised in favor of freedom. This powerful accession to the liberal cause was the inferior priesthood. Mexico was, at this time, divided into four archbishoprics; these were subdivided, each, into several dioceses; and these into innumerable cures and deaconries. All these orders were accountable to the High Court of Inquisition in the capital, which issued edicts against heresies and impious doctrines, both religious and political.

In accordance with the universal proscription of the native-born, all the higher church dignitaries, without exception, were selected from European Spaniards. In fact, from the Archbishop of Mexico, whose salary amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, down to those who received a sum barely sufficient for their comfortable support, there was scarcely a Creole ecclesiastic.

These last were to be found in every little village, or hacienda, or collection of wretched hovels, in the viceroyalty. From their wide dispersion among the masses, together with the almost unbounded influence which each one wielded over his small flock, whether for good or ill, it may be readily conceived that their concerted agency, if it could be brought about, would be no mean aid to any cause.

These inferior priests, though mostly well educated, and many of them, in every respect, far more competent than those above them to fill high offices in the church, led, for the most part, wretched lives. Having no fixed salaries, they were obliged to depend, for their support, on the pre-

carious proceeds derived from burials, baptisms, and marriages, among their flocks,—loving enough, perhaps, and willing enough to contribute what they could to the support of their ghostly advisers, but already so impoverished by oppressive taxation, and by the extortions of unscrupulous officials, that they could scarcely procure for themselves and their miserable children and superannuated parents that which would keep alive the vital spark, and cover their nakedness.

It may therefore well be believed that these priests often suffered for the necessities of life, and were obliged to go in rags. Nor could they see any hope of relief from this pitiable condition,—on the contrary, they too well knew that, like those who had filled the sacred post before them, there would be no respite even in their old age, save only such as death would afford them. It is no matter of wonder, then, that many of them were soured in their tempers, and alienated from a government to which one half their sufferings were due, and from an ecclesiastical polity to which the other half were justly chargeable.

The crisis soon came; and, to the surprise of all, the man who first raised the standard of revolt was a priest,—Don Miguel Hidalgo, curate of Dolores, in the province of Guanaxuato. This man, though possessed of sound judgment, was by no means a genius. It was a terrible risk to run. Such hazardous attempts, with their fearful responsibility, usually fall to the lot of some military genius, long accustomed to handle a well-disciplined army, and even such leaders as he often lose their heads.

But here was an obscure priest, unknown beyond the narrow bounds of his curacy, ignorant of the first rudiments of military science, without a dollar in money, and destitute of arms, ammunition and supplies, undertaking to excite a whole nation, half stupefied by a long and rigorous

bondage, to rise up against their oppressors, who possessed all the usual means and appliances of war, as well as of oppression. It looked like a desperate throw of the die: it looked, indeed, like the wild scheme of a madman; and the fact that, in the face of all these disadvantages, the revolt came so near triumphing, in a few brief months, shows how fearfully in earnest must have been the masses in striving to cast off the tyranny which had been so long grinding them, body and soul, into the dust.

Making known his intentions to his three most intimate friends, Allende, Aldama, and Abasolo,—all of them captains in a royal cavalry regiment in an adjoining town,—he took the field, inscribing on his banner, “For the protection of religion and the redress of wrongs.”

He next declared for the abolition of the odious Indian tribute; and in a short time, thousands of that race flew to his standard; nor had they forgotten the revolting tortures and the wholesale murders practised upon their unoffending ancestors by the Spaniards. Only a few days elapsed before he captured Guanaxuato, a city containing eighty thousand inhabitants. Here he possessed himself of five millions of the public funds. He remained here only long enough to arm and equip his army, which as yet was but little better than a mob,—a large portion of them being armed only with clubs, stones, slings, bows and arrows, axes, and machetas, or heavy swords.

About the middle of October, 1810, Hidalgo, at the head of an immense host of Creoles, Mestizoes, and Indians, started for the capital, overthrowing everything in his march. Towards the last of the same month, he reached Toluca, thirty or forty miles from the city of Mexico, and moved up, soon afterwards, almost to its suburbs.

The authorities were thrown into the utmost consterna-

tion. Venegas, the viceroy, had only two thousand men to defend the city, while his two principal generals, Cadena, at Queretaro, and Calleja, at San Luis Potosi, were at so great a distance that he could hope for no aid from them. Had Hidalgo taken immediate advantage of this confused state of things, and moved boldly on the city, teeming with malcontents, it must certainly have fallen into his hands. Such was Allende's advice to him. He, however, remained here in a vacillating state of mind for two or three days.

Meanwhile the crafty viceroy, well knowing with what material he had to deal in the superstitious masses who followed Hidalgo, caused him and his principal generals to be solemnly excommunicated, and a special curse to be pronounced upon them by the High Court of the Inquisition of Mexico.

These awful tidings he found means to circulate throughout the patriot army. The chief himself, unawed by the dread anathema, hurled back a defiant reply, in the name of the holy cause which he represented, and had it read to his army as an antidote to the fulmination of his enemies. Despite all this, however, his benighted host were overawed by the threats of divine vengeance. They murmured — they wavered — many of them seemed about to break out into open mutiny — unless he would withdraw from the city which, they said, had been taken under the special care of heaven. In accordance with their wishes, he now commenced his retreat.

Cadena and the bloody monster, Calleja, made forced marches, and, coming up with Hidalgo, at Aculco, defeated him; then, again, at Guanaxuato, the scene of his first exploits; and, in January, 1811, near Guadalajara. Thence he retreated, pursued by Calleja, to Zacatecas, and thence to San Luis Potosi, — his object being to pass

by way of Saltillo, to the borders of Louisiana, where he intended to remain for a while, hoping to get substantial aid from the United States and renew his attempt at revolution.

Salcedo, the captain-general of the north-eastern provinces, dispatched a force to cut him off in the direction of Saltillo, while Arredondo followed hotly in his rear. But at Acatita de Bajan, in the month of March, 1811, he was basely betrayed by Elisondo, one of his chief officers. Many of the leaders were executed on the spot. Others, who had scattered, were slain wherever found.

Hidalgo himself was taken to Chihuahua, and put to death on the 27th day of July,—meeting his fate with great coolness and bravery.

There were also executed at Chihuahua, at various times, from the first of May to the last of July, Allende, generalissimo; Aldama, lieutenant-general; Ximenes, captain-general and governor of Monterey; besides three major-generals, two brigadiers, and two or three colonels.

One of Hidalgo's most prominent adherents, Colonel Delgado, was arrested at San Antonio,—where he lived,—by order of Salcedo, (governor of Texas, and a near relative of the captain-general of the same name,) executed, and his head stuck on a pole, in a conspicuous part of the town. Another, General Bernardo Gutierrez, escaped to Natchitoches, as we have already seen.

CHAPTER VI.

This comes off well; here's a wise officer.—*Measure for Measure.*

SUCH was the substance of the information which the Mexican general communicated to his eager listener, during the many hours they were in conference.

“If I have depicted my native land in unlovely colors,”—he now continued, by way of peroration,—“think not that my feelings are in any degree estranged from her. I do it, because I want your aid and the aid of all you can influence to rescue her from the pit of misery and degradation into which she has been dragged; and to effect this end, I tell you the whole truth—but nothing more. God knows, it should suffice to soften the heart of a fiend to sympathy, at least, if no further. There is not a country in the world that can show more natural beauties, nor one that is more favored by Nature with all that can contribute to man's happiness. Yet is there none, at this moment, on which there seems to rest a deeper curse. It is felt by all who have any feelings, from the boor to the most refined. The one can find no happiness or pleasure in the society of his lowly family—that narrow sphere which bounds his influence and his aspirations. The other, when he stirs abroad, cannot glow at sight of the sweet valleys; nor can his soul dilate over the grandeur of mountains, because the blight of chains is on the air. They cannot always be seen—they do not always clank—but they are always there: they fetter the *mind*. Though the treasures which her mines afford are exhaustless, she

swarms with beggars. Vainly do teeming wild-flowers scent the air, for their fragrance, go where you will, is mingled with the offensive reek of squalor.

"Then as regards the people—I acknowledge the fact with humiliation, but not with despair—they are stamped with the repulsive features of anarchy and semi-barbarism. This could not but be the case, since the elements of which the great masses of the population are composed consist of an aboriginal race content to exist in unmolested indigence; a chaos of mongrel castes, stolid, superstitious, and ignorant; a numerous Creole class, wealthy, though mortified and discontented; and a compact phalanx of European officials, pampered menials of the crown, whose chief concern is to profit by every iniquitous act of the government."

"But, General," said Magee, "is it possible for such a people, even if freed, to govern themselves?"

"I do not know," answered Bernardo; "no one, except their Creator, can know. But, for God's sake, let them try; and if they fail, the only remaining hope for poor Mexico, is to be taken under the protection of your own glorious country."

"Yes," said Magee, "they certainly have a right to the experiment of self-government; whether they succeed or not is another thing."

"Well, General," the American went on, after a pause, "you have thoroughly convinced me of the justice of your cause. I can also see that you had, at one time, a very fair prospect of succeeding; but that series of disasters, winding up with the execution of so many of your prominent leaders, seems to me to leave but little hope of accomplishing anything—at least for the present."

"The present, sir," answered Bernardo, "is the very time for action. Armies of patriots are springing up all over the land. General Rayon and General Villagran, with a

large force, have, at this moment, possession of all the defiles leading from the northern provinces to the city of Mexico; so that Calleja and Salcedo are really cut off from the capital. Could Rayon have succeeded in reaching Hidalgo, at Acatita de Bajan, before his disaster, all would have been well; but he was intercepted, and forced to retire to the passes which he now commands. Then, there is Morelos, a priest, like Hidalgo, and, I think, the most efficient of the patriot leaders, unless it be his young lieutenant-general, Matamoras, also a priest. These are working with all their might in the southern provinces. Another army has blocked the way from the capital to Vera Cruz, the principal and almost the only seaport-town of the viceroyalty. So, there is little doubt, the tyrants will soon have their hands full.

“You must reflect, sir, that scarcely a year ago we plunged suddenly into this war, without money and without supplies, all of which we had to capture from the enemy. And what was perhaps worse, we had no concert of action—no discipline—no organization—no regular plans; but these things are progressively improving, and all will come right in time.

“I have no more doubt, sir, that we shall succeed in breaking the power of our oppressors, than I have of my own sincerity in the cause. Ay, we can do it without foreign aid, but not so speedily. If your countrymen do not assist, the struggle may be protracted for years, and blood drench the land,—whole provinces be laid waste,—and thousands of homes be draped in mourning for the dead and the desolation around.”

“General,” inquired Magee, “did none of your countrymen in the province of Texas make any demonstration of throwing off the yoke during those bloody days?”

“They did,” replied Bernardo; “and, considering how

few of them there are, a very gallant demonstration it was. The Delgados, the Arochas, the Traviezos, the Leals, and others, who had formed a privileged class in San Antonio de Bexar from the time their fathers came from the Canary Isles, on the king's invitation, to people Texas, in 1730, were at the head of the movement. They first found means to corrupt the troops, and selected a young captain, Juan Casas, to command them. He marched at their head, to the government-house, at night; and, seizing Governor Salcedo and other officers, sent them off, in chains, to the interior of Mexico. Even while this was being enacted, however, Hidalgo had already been defeated,—though the news had not yet reached Texas. No sooner were those disastrous tidings known in San Antonio, than a plot was set afoot to depose Casas from the command, and win the troops back to the royal cause. Casas was accordingly seized, chained, and hurried away to Chihuahua, where he was soon afterwards executed, and his head put into a sack and dispatched to San Antonio, with the view of striking terror into the citizens and the garrison of that place, and thus deterring them from following his disloyal example."

"This, however, proves," said Magee, "that there is at least some patriotism among the Mexican population of Texas,—which was the main object of my inquiry."

"As to that," returned Bernardo, "there is no doubt the people of that province are only awaiting a favorable opportunity to strike for their freedom."

"Now, General," said Magee,—after a long pause in the conversation, during which both seemed, as they rose and paced the floor on opposites of the spacious room, to be digesting what had already been said, or to be laying plans for the future,—“how many Spanish troops do you suppose there are in the province of Texas?”

"Salcedo has about twelve hundred regulars at San Antonio. At the various intervening posts there are probably eight hundred more. These are, I think, all the Spaniards have east of the Rio Grande."

"What force would it require to drive them out of the province?"

"Five hundred Americans could, I doubt not, march from the Sabine to the vicinity of San Antonio without serious opposition. Before surrendering that city, the enemy would probably make a stand, as it is accounted the key to the whole province. For that purpose, they would have—including the garrisons which the Americans would drive before them—about two thousand well-disciplined troops."

Magee next made many inquiries about the geography and topography of Texas; and got Bernardo to explain the situation of the different military posts, together with their several defences; all which things were the more easily explained, from the fact that Bernardo produced from his pocket a map of Texas, which had been made by Nolan—the first ever made of that country, then so little known.

"Now," said Magee, as soon as his inquiries had been satisfactorily answered, "I am enabled to submit, for your consideration, the outlines of a campaign; which, provided we can raise three hundred Americans, I make no doubt can be successfully carried out. It is a very simple plan, with little or no manœuvring, though manœuvring enough may be required by unforeseen emergencies arising during its execution."

"First of all, we must not divide our forces, but must concentrate on every position of the enemy in succession. Their small guard at the Sabine crossing, *here*," continued the speaker, indicating that point on the map spread out

before them, "which we will first encounter on our march, will, of course, offer but slight resistance, if any,—but be either dispersed or captured.

"*Here*, at Nacogdoches, which you say is forty miles further on, we may meet with some resistance; but energy and bravery, with perhaps a little strategy, to save blood, will soon overcome it. The taking of *this* position—Spanish Bluff, here, on the Trinity, a hundred miles, you say, from Nacogdoches—may, owing to the falling back upon it of the other two garrisons, give us some severe fighting. Here, you say, we shall find ammunition and supplies.

"Having thus penetrated nearly a hundred and fifty miles into the interior, we can afford to rest a while on our laurels; and may safely rely on the news of our success bringing others to our standard. I do not believe we can raise more than three hundred men, until we shall have, in this way, guaranteed our success to others, who will then, no doubt, be eager to join us. Having received sufficient accession to our force, we will then push on at once to San Antonio,—there being, you say, no intervening garrison. Salcedo will either march out and meet us, or stand on the defensive within the town. In either case, we shall probably have some hot work. But I think we can beat him, and perhaps capture his whole force, arms, ammunition and supplies.

"At San Antonio we will again take a resting-spell. In fact, I tell you candidly now, I think it very doubtful whether Americans will be willing to go further. They will probably be content to hold such a large and attractive country as Texas, and cannot be induced, by any offers you may extend to them, to cross the Rio Grande."

"Well," said Bernardo, "even if we can do no more than redeem Texas from the Gachupins, that alone will be a glorious work. There will then be, at least, a place

to which the Mexican exile — when hunted down during the dark days that may come again and again before the independence of his native country is secured — may fly from the vengeance of his foe, and rest and recruit a while ere he plunges once more into the struggle.”

“Once established at San Antonio,” continued Magee, “the first step will be to inaugurate a provisional government in the interest of the patriots. As we shall then be among a Mexican population, it is my opinion that you yourself should be placed at the head of the proposed government. By this, we not only conciliate the native population in and about San Antonio, and secure their more cordial co-operation; but, at the same time, we prove to the whole Mexican nation, that American ambition and cupidity, of which they are very jealous — morbidly so, I think — are not at the bottom of our project.

“By such a course, too, matters will assume a permanent appearance to the adventurous young men of the United States, and they will, at length, swell our ranks to a degree that may justify an onward movement beyond the Rio Grande to reinforce the patriot army. At least, we could establish the independence of Texas, and make it a permanent rallying-ground, as you have said, for your banished countrymen.”

“Your plan is well laid,” said Bernardo, with enthusiasm, into which personal ambition, peradventure, entered largely; “and I cannot doubt of its success.”

“You have proposed,” Magee went on, “that I should command the republican force; but there is — ”

“Yes,” interrupted Bernardo, with some eagerness, — “almost as soon as I saw you, I was convinced you were the proper person for that. And I can assure you, I was not at all sorry that before I sought this conference all the other officers at the post had declined to direct the campaign.”

“Well, be that as it may,” resumed Magee, “I was about to remark, that, although I would probably be more acceptable than yourself with Americans, you would, no doubt, have equally the advantage over me, when we come to deal with your own countrymen. I will, therefore, suggest this arrangement. Although it might be well that I should be the real leader, so long as Americans alone, or chiefly Americans, are concerned, you ought to be the nominal commander from the very opening of the campaign. When we shall get possession of San Antonio, although I think you should not only retain this nominal military leadership, but should be placed at the head of the proposed civil government,—yet, let me say, we shall expect you to advise with us, even then, touching the policy to be pursued in all matters of moment.”

“Of course,” replied Bernardo, “I shall always be glad to receive the opinion of yourself and your countrymen; and can promise that I shall be largely influenced by your judgment.”

“Now,” said the American, “since we find we can agree on the general policy to be pursued, we will arrange matters for initiating the campaign; or, rather, for making up our little army and its equipments. There is one point we must never for a single moment lose sight of,—and that is, to keep our movements, as much as possible, a profound secret. We should communicate our objects to those only who are to be engaged with us; we should employ as few agents, and as trustworthy ones, as possible. In fact, I think it better that you and myself should attend personally to everything in our power; for should the United States government hear of our plans, they will have no alternative, since they are at peace with Spain, but to stay our proceedings. Moreover, the governor of Louisiana, I understand, has repeatedly declared, that he should consider himself

constrained to use every legitimate means to suppress all hostile demonstrations of the kind from the borders of this State. I will go at once to New Orleans, and perhaps to other points in the Southern States, and see what can be done in the way of getting volunteers, as well as arms and supplies."

"And, for my part," said Bernardo, "I will remain in this vicinity, and do what I can here. I have an old friend, Colonel Davenport, an American, who settled several years ago near Nacogdoches. From him I may reasonably hope to procure aid, since I have often heard him say he would be willing to make almost any sacrifice to break the Spanish rule in Texas. I will find means to communicate with him on the subject; and out of his wealth, which is considerable, I am sure he will at least contribute liberally, if, indeed, he will not lend us the aid of his personal exertions and his excellent judgment."

"I have often seen the Colonel about this place," said Magee, "but was not aware he was one of the disaffected citizens of Texas. If he could be induced to accept the position of quartermaster, he would make a most efficient one. By all means secure his aid, if it can be done. I would suggest, however, that, instead of going yourself to Nacogdoches, if such is your purpose, you send him a message by some reliable person, to come here to confer with you. This would greatly lessen the risk of exposing our scheme."

"I shall certainly not go myself," returned the Mexican. "It would be as much as my head is worth to venture to Nacogdoches, unless backed by an armed force."

"Another great point," resumed Magee, "is, that we must act with energy, and raise the proposed force as soon as possible. The longer we linger on this side of the Sabine, the greater the danger that our expedition will be broken up. But once on Spanish territory, with a force

sufficient to maintain ourselves there, — the United States government cannot reach us. Once established in Nacogdoches, for instance, we can afford to wait until our schemes are further matured and unorganized reinforcements arrive from the United States."

"There is," said Bernardo, after a pause, "another very important point to be gained; which, as I have vainly waited for you to name, I will venture to do it myself. In fact, could we secure the object to which I allude, we might make bold to march as far as Nacogdoches at once, and await, outside the jurisdiction of the United States, the accession of volunteers."

"Do you suppose for a moment I had not thought of *that*? Why, General, I have thought of it at least twenty times since this conference began."

"Did you not consider it of sufficient moment even to mention it?"

"It is of very great moment — I had almost said, vital; and I refrained from any allusion to it, only because I knew it could never be accomplished — never, I am exceedingly sorry to say."

"I see no good reasons why it should not," said Bernardo, with surprise; "many reasons why it should. You surely do not know to what I refer."

"You can refer to but one thing: our securing the services of the Neutral Ground men."

"And what insurmountable obstacle is there to this?"

Magee then detailed to the General his late transactions with the freebooters in regard to the capture of the silver; only stopping short of his personal difficulty with the Chief.

"Truly a misfortune," said Bernardo, dejectedly.

"And one," said the American officer, "which you may readily judge is irreparable, when I tell you they have sworn to have my blood, come what may."

"Nevertheless," Bernardo resumed, as soon as he had rallied from the shock of the disappointment, "I will try what I can do in the way of tranquillizing them. I will get them together and make such offers as I think best calculated to reconcile them to your leadership. I will tell them not only of the fertile lands and the wild horses they will be entitled to, but of the rich mines they shall share if successful; and of the surplus of confiscated property which will fall to their lot in the distribution, as well as the lucrative offices some of them may hope to hold under the new government of the province. This will only be forestalling the address which I shall probably deliver to all our forces, so soon as we shall have fairly arrived on Spanish soil."

"You may try all these things," said Magee; "they can do no harm. But I have no hope of your succeeding. If I am to lead the invasion, we shall have to dispense with their services,—which I much regret, as they are brave men,—and triumph, or fail, as the case may be, without them. I should, however, advise you not to think of mentioning the subject to any of the men. Speak only to Gatewood; for not only can you influence them more through him than in any other way, but I am confident that, if you will first get his pledge to secrecy, he will not divulge our plans. On the other hand, if you confer with the men, some of them will be sure to betray us: the government will then get wind of the expedition, and suppress it at once."

"True enough," said the Mexican; "as I spoke on the impulse of the moment, that did not occur to me. Of course I shall make advances only to the Chief."

"And here, General," said Magee,— "as I have not yet absolutely accepted the command, but have only been discussing the merits of the matter in hand on the assumption

that I *had* accepted,—I will now give you this conditional answer. In the first place, I will accept the command, provided you can't get the freebooters to act under any one else. If you can, I would advise you by all means to do so."

"As I have not the most remote idea," replied Bernardo, "of trying to secure their services except under your leadership, you may consider that objection to your immediate acceptance removed.—What are your other conditions?"

"There is but one other: that you will allow me until the middle of the afternoon, to-morrow, to make my final decision. I ask this, because there may be a crisis in my affairs to-morrow, about noon, that may render my acceptance impossible."

"Certainly," replied the other; "digest the matter at your leisure."

This last interchange of remarks seeming to bring the interview naturally to a termination, Bernardo bade good-night and turned away from the threshold, revolving in his mind the mysterious allusion couched in Magee's closing speech.

Day was now breaking, and the young American officer turned in to snatch what repose he might in the brief time that remained before the wonted day-din of the town should rise to disturb his slumbers.

CHAPTER VII.

Great Heaven! what vain beliefs
Have stirr'd the pulse and led the hopes of man,
As if that honor could be bought by blood.—MISS LANDON.

My brothers of the state
Cannot but feel this wrong as 'twere their own.—*Othello*.

ABOUT eleven o'clock, Magee was galloping alone through the western outskirts of Natchitoches, on his way to the Arroyo Honda, six miles from the town, to fill his deadly appointment with Gatewood. His dress and equipments—in fact, everything about him—were much as on the previous day, when he delivered his own challenge to that dreaded Chief,—the only exception being a small-sword suspended from his belt.

Up to the time of his interview with Bernardo, he had intended informing Gatewood, as soon as they should meet on the appointed ground, of the deception practised upon him with regard to his own identity,—explaining how, and under what peculiar circumstances, the principal and his second who carried the challenge, came to be one and the same person—namely, Augustus W. Magee, 1st lieutenant of the United States Artillery; and that he was ready for the combat to begin.

A great change, however, had, meanwhile, been wrought in his feelings. How low had those personalities, which a few hours before had so grievously wounded his honor and stimulated his pride and all his indignant manhood to resent them,—how low had they sunk in his estimation, on the looming up of the glorious fame that awaited him,

should he lend his guidance to his countrymen in their efforts to release ten millions of fellow-beings from a debasing bondage. But yesterday, it seemed to him of prime importance that he should wipe out, here, in the lonely forest, by the cold-blooded process of the duello, the imputation of cowardice cast upon his fair name; while, on the other hand, there was now a stage inviting him to act, from which the curtain was about lifting,—a stage so wide that the whole world would be the witnesses of his daring—the applauders of his heroism.

So far, therefore, from being now, as he had been all along, eager for the approaching combat, he fain would avert it, if it were possible to do so. He was no less loth to spill the blood of a brave man,—who, else, might live to lend his powerful aid to the same noble cause,—than he was to yield up his own breath in this comparatively obscure way, when a career of true glory lured him on.

In accordance with these feelings, as he neared the ground fixed on for the trial, he resolved, as the last hope of averting the fatal issue of the meeting, to avail himself of the advantages which his incognito afforded him for this purpose.

Scarcely had he reached the eastern bank of the creek, and noted that the trees cast their shadows exactly with the road, when he descried Gatewood approaching the opposite bank, on foot. Magee did not draw rein on reaching the margin of the stream; and by the time he had crossed to the other side, his foe was confronting him.

“You are, no doubt, surprised,” began Magee, “that my friend is not here to answer your acceptance of his challenge.”

“You are aware, I presume,” was the reply, “that, by the code, you are required to take your friend’s place?”

"Fully aware, sir; and quite ready, if you demand it," was the prompt response. "But —"

"Well, this is rather public, and we may be interrupted here. Let us withdraw from the road, at least."

"Lead the way to some suitable spot," said Magee, as he dismounted. "I presume you know the ground hereabouts."

"Every foot of it."

With this, Gatewood turned aside into the woods, followed by the other, leading his horse. They had advanced about a hundred yards, when Gatewood halted at an opening in the timber.

"This place will do, I think," said he.

"There could be none better, whether our meeting is to end in words or war," said Magee, — then retired to a little distance and secured his horse to a limb.

The spot selected was an open, level space of thick sward, about ten paces across, each way, flanked on one side by a pile of huge rocks, heaped there by nature's hand; while on the other ran the creek. Against the largest rock, which beetled over a little, there was a smirch of smoke spreading out, and gradually thinning as it ascended along the gray granite surface, until, by the time it reached the top, the mark was scarcely visible. This fuliginous deposit had no doubt been caused by a fire kindled at the base of the rock by some roving Pariah, who had bivouacked there, — perhaps tented there for a season, — most probably Gatewood himself, since he found the place so readily on the present occasion.

"Since I delivered you Lieutenant Magee's note," began Magee, as soon as he had returned, "events have transpired which have caused him to regret the challenge. With your indulgence, I will briefly recount those events."

The Chief signified his assent.

"Yesterday," Magee began, "a Mexican officer, of high rank, reached Natchitoches, fresh from the scene of strife in Mexico. He represents the patriot cause as by no means so desperate as previous reports made it — reports, which, of course, you have heard. It is still making great headway in many portions of the country. All it needs, to insure success, is a formidable diversion from this quarter. An expedition is about being set on foot, to leave Natchitoches, as soon as it can be got ready. This is intended to drive all Spaniards from Texas, declare her independent, and set up a republican government. For this purpose, while we expect to get the aid of many men from the United States, we do not feel sure of success, unless we can secure the co-operation of the men of the Neutral Ground. If they join us, their fame and fortunes will be made along with our own.

"Lieutenant Magee, who has been selected to command the expedition, hopes to fight side by side with them yet, and to rival their Chief in daring deeds on many a glorious field, instead of seeking his heart's blood in a way that can bring honor to neither. He bids me say to you that he very much regrets having suffered himself to be goaded by your taunt, to the extent of inflicting a disgraceful punishment on some of your men; and that he is willing to make amends to them in every possible way. He also regrets exceedingly having sent the challenge, which he did under the pressure of momentary anger; and authorizes me, not only to withdraw it, but to apologize for its very offensive tone,— casting, as it did, insinuations against your bravery, which neither he, nor any one else who has heard but the simple truth of you, ever questioned."

Throughout this interview, the two men were pacing to and fro the narrow bounds of the greensward, often crossing each other's paths, their step quickened or retarded,

according as their feelings were excited or not, by their words.

"And why is not Lieutenant Magee here, to tell me these things himself?" demanded the stalwart freebooter, suddenly staying his step, and looking fiercely at his disguised foe.

So searching, indeed, was the look, that Magee began to think Gatewood suspected his disguise,—or, rather, that he had really known him all this time, and yesterday to boot. So convinced was he of this, for a moment, that he was on the point of declaring his identity, and, as the only alternative left him, drawing his sword without more ado. But reflecting, instantly, that he never had any great cause of grievance against this man, and that what little he had was now sunk into insignificance by the untold grievances of millions, so lately and so vividly depicted to him by one just from the scene, he once more checked the deadly impulse, and resolved, then and there, that, if this meeting was destined to eventuate in hostilities, the moody Chieftain of the Neutral Ground, and not himself, must initiate them.

Nor were these reflections at all weakened by the fact that he found the grim bandit gradually, though quite unintentionally, overcoming his prejudices and gaining on his good opinion. When he visited his encampment, he expected to encounter a monster of repulsive front. He found, instead, a *man*, presenting not only a highly favored person and an attractive countenance, but polite manners withal. Here, in this second meeting, with a mind already disposed by late events to extenuate still further his misdeeds, he saw but a noble leader—noble, provided he could only be induced to abjure the lawless life he now led, and to direct his energies and his talents into a proper channel.

Instead, therefore, of answering fiercely, he quietly replied,—still trusting that his disguise had not been penetrated:

“Lieutenant Magee’s reasons for not giving you these explanations in person must be obvious enough, when you consider that his main object is to avert a collision. Were two men of such spirit to meet after the insults that have passed between you, meeting would be but fighting.”

“What then,” asked Gatewood, “becomes of my charge against him of cowardice?”

This remark, though gently enough uttered, caused Magee’s quick blood to mount to his face, flushing it all over, while his gleaming eyes instantly shot a glance into those before him, as he replied :

“If this meeting, sir, is to end without bloodshed —”

He had, during this heated moment of passion, forgotten that he was only Magee’s friend, and thought himself Magee, and thus came very near betraying his identity; but suddenly recollecting how things really were, and curbing his wrath, he continued, —stammering a little in the first words :

“That is — I mean — if you intend settling this affair amicably with my friend through me, the less said about that charge the better, unless you name it to withdraw it. Now, the truth is, my friend had no reason whatever to think that you lacked personal courage. His taunt was altogether the result of yours. He has withdrawn the charge, and has freely acknowledged your bravery, although you must own he had quite as much reason to question it as you had to question *his*. Why, then, can you not act a generous part, and admit not that he is brave, — for, of that you may know nothing, — but that you have no ground to deem him the reverse?”

There now ensued a painful pause; for Gatewood, instead of replying at once, looked down for some moments, as if considering what answer to make. This hesitation irritated Magee no little. He found it a trying task to

await quietly the decision of a man who was, even then, coolly revolving in his mind, whether or not he who awaited that decision was a coward—deliberately weighing the *pros* and *cons* bearing upon that delicate question. He resolved to cut the judgment short, let it be what it might.

“Well, sir, this is truly hard to bear!” he broke out. “If you find it so very difficult to decide that point, you and Lieutenant Magee shall yet confront each other. If you do not know he is a brave man, you soon shall know that he is, at least, brave enough to meet *you*, face to face and steel to steel. Draw! for I am the man whom you insult.”

With this, Magee, transformed into a perfect tiger for energy, activity, and wrath combined, whipped out his rapier and took position.

Gatewood, much to his opponent's surprise, instead of responding, in kind, to this tornado of word and manner, merely withdrew his eyes from the ground, and, fixing them steadily on the stormy speaker before him, observed, in tones as calm as the zephyr's breath:

“Lieutenant Magee, if you expected, by making a few changes in your person, to disguise yourself from me, all I can say, is, you knew little of me. I was once in your company a moment. Where, or when, it matters not. I was in disguise then. When I have once looked fairly into a man's eyes, and can get a look into them again, great, indeed, must be the change that would make me mistake him for a stranger. I knew you yesterday as soon as I saw you; and had I but given the signal, my men would have torn you in pieces. Of course, I knew you to-day. From the time I accepted your challenge, until a few moments ago, I made no doubt one of us would fall in the appointed fight; for I had no reason to doubt you were

brave, and would meet me or would have good cause for refusing. The insulting note I sent you did not express my real sentiments. I penned it because irritated to think that the officers of a great government would voluntarily condescend to protect smugglers, instead of leaving, alike, all men who are committing unlawful acts, to protect themselves,—as we of the Neutral Ground have done for years, and hope to do for years to come.

“And now I will say, that, although I came here fully resolved to shed your blood if this arm could do it, I was soon made glad to find that you offered, instead of deadly combat, a truce to hostilities. For it left me an opening for proposing that which is much nearer my heart than fighting you.”

Long before the Chief had spoken thus far, Magee had not only pretty fairly caught the contagion of his calmness, but felt, besides, no slight degree of that confusion which comes over us when made unpleasantly conscious that we have quite overdone a matter of passion. These circumstances, together with the conciliatory tone of his opponent's remarks, had banished every appearance of menace from his attitude, look, and manner, by the time his turn to speak had arrived.

“You mean, then,” said he, “that you will join our —”

“No,” replied Gatewood; “I was not thinking of your military plans. I will allude to them presently. If you will but do all you can to have my men released, I promise not only to forget all about the little matter which brought us here, but to maintain your bravery on all occasions when it may be called in question. You caused the poor fellows to be whipped and tortured, although they had never harmed you or yours. God knows they have suffered enough already, for merely plundering thieves; and if you will only effect their release, I think I can safely

promise that none of us will ever afterwards — I dare not say, bear you malice, for that we shall probably carry to our graves — but that we will never seek to work you personal harm, nor oppose the cause which you expect to engage in.

“As to our co-operation with you in the proposed campaign, however, it is not to be thought of; and the sooner you drop it from your calculations, the better both for us and yourself. We may overlook the past, but we cannot forgive; and as regards forgetting, it will be impossible even to *try*.”

“I pledge you my honor that I will exert all my influence to effect their release,” said Magee, somewhat moved at the Chief’s unexpected display of feeling in behalf of his men, though at the same time greatly discouraged to hear that there was no hope of securing the important aid of the powers holding sway in Neutralia.

He would probably have renewed his attempt at persuasion — at least, would have given Gatewood to understand that he still entertained hopes of his final co-operation, as he called to mind the more definite and tangible offers which Bernardo had pledged himself to make. As he was about to speak to that effect, however, the Chief waved adieu; and thrusting aside the bushes which hedged in their narrow stage, opposite the side they had entered, disappeared in the dense wood, leaving the other no alternative but to mount his horse and turn homeward.

CHAPTER VIII.

Oh, why was woman made so fair, or man
So weak as to see that more than one had beauty? — *Festus*.

I partly think
A due sincerity govern'd his deeds
Till he did look on me. — *Measure for Measure*.

As if for death, some lonely trumpet peal'd. — CAMPBELL.

FOR many weeks, refugees, mostly persons of note, were passing through the Neutral Ground, on their way to some place of safety. They knew too well the nature of the foes with whom they had to deal to trust themselves within their reach; for it has always been, that when Spaniards triumphed, after a struggle with the oppressed, they have required more blood and persecution to appease their vengeance—miscalled by them, justice—than any other enlightened people on the face of the globe.

Gatewood had given orders to his men that none of these unfortunates, of whatever degree, should be disturbed while crossing his territory, or sojourning therein, if they should choose to sojourn. Whatever his faults, or crimes, he never added to the distresses of those already under affliction; and the same policy was on all occasions inculcated upon his followers, though not quite so invariably obeyed.

One afternoon, he was returning, on horseback, to Camp Wildwood—which the reader has already visited with Magee—from the inspection of a building that he had lately caused to be erected for himself on the margin of a certain lake, presently to be described, and standing in the heart of the Neutral Ground. Finding it more convenient

to leave, for the time, the net-work of by-paths which penetrated the forest in every direction, and with the intricacies of which he, as well as most of his men, was perfectly familiar, he emerged from one of these by-paths into the main road, already more than once alluded to, intending, after passing along that thoroughfare for the distance of a mile or two, to strike off in the direction of the camp.

It chanced that soon after he had entered the road and was moving westward, he met a party of mounted refugees, consisting of five persons. In front, and riding abreast, were an elderly man and a youth; while a few paces behind them came a young lady. These three, evidently of pure Spanish descent, were all well mounted on stylish horses.

Bringing up the rear, were a Mexican man and woman, both somewhat stricken in years, riding mules and driving before them two pack-animals of the same species, one laden with a tent and blankets, together with provisions and a few cooking-utensils, the other bearing various articles appertaining to tent-life.

The fiery-eyed, classic-featured youth wore upon his face a sternness altogether alien to his years. He sat his horse in military style, was attired in a jacket and nether garments of black velvet, with red cord running along their seams. The former vestment was decorated by a row of silver buttons on each side in front; the latter, after the Mexican fashion, by a row of the same extending from the waist down, outside of each leg, to the foot, buttoned, however, only as far as the knee, the lower portion flowing loose. A crimson silk sash was gracefully knotted about his waist, the fringed ends pendent, and at times playing against his horse's side. His slouched hat, of sombre hue, was garnished by a black ostrich-feather. He carried the only weapons of the party,—namely, a pair of richly mounted pistols, in

his holsters, and at his side a sabre with gold-plated hilt. The horse which he rode was caparisoned in the most ornate fashion, the bridle, saddle, and housings, of the best material, being elaborately wrought with gold and silver thread.

The style of vestments worn by the elderly man told at once of his priestly calling. These ecclesiastical trappings, apparently so ill-befitting the occasion, may have been donned to throw a holy air around, not only his own person, but the whole party, to the end, that none of them might suffer harm, or be subjected to insult, during the perilous journey they had been making.

The beauty of the lady—both in her oval face and her slender, yet well-rounded person—would, at a glance, have struck the most indifferent beholder as of no common order; while any one peculiarly susceptible to such influences might well have been more than transiently impressed, even while passing,—though she were never seen again.

Her style bespoke the blending of Moorish with Castilian blood, though her dark dress was, in nothing, different from that of an American lady, except that she wore over her robe a rich scarf embroidered in sober hues. This, none but a Spanish woman knows how to wear; and in her graceful handling alone is it really beautiful. If she rides—and those of them who ride at all show splendid horsemanship—she knows exactly when and how to gather up its folds, and when and how to let them flow in rhythm with her movements. If she walks—and who can walk like a Spanish woman?—it waves as gracefully about her as an angel's wing.

Her hair,—except the eye, the chief pride of the Spanish beauty,—which had probably been braided or coiled upon her head, now, as though glad to be released, gambolled in the breeze, and being wavy, and flossy

withal, was none the less beautiful — nay, more so — for the disorder.

The large, dark, changeful eyes betrayed, from beneath their jetty fringe, the attributes of those southern climes where they had been born and nursed. They could flash on you until you well might quail; they could pour forth on your darker hours their soothing dew; but between these, they could languish on you a twilight of such weird softness that you would pray to dwell in their gentle radiance forever. The pencilled brows were drawn up into that arch which so surely betokens sadness; and, indeed, there was wanting but an unrelieved pallor to make that lovely face the saddest of pictures. Exercise, however, had brought a ruddy tinge to the cheek, and the mouth was as fresh as the morning rose, the petals whereof are just enough open to hint of pearly treasures within.

Thus was this living tablet relieved from what else had caused a pang to the gazer. It pains us to look upon the unbroken whiteness of a monument beneath which we know bright hopes are buried, but not quite so much when we find that the deathly pallor is relieved by a spot or two of vermeil moss upon its face.

Much of all this Gatewood saw during the brief time that they paused to learn of him the distance to Natchitoches, and whether or not (they being very travel-worn, they said) there was any nearer available place of rest and refreshment; and, for a moment, he was humbled by the sudden consciousness that in his stern breast there was rising a wild tumult attended by heart-throbs of a sort he had not known for years. Truth to say, he felt, just at the time, heartily ashamed of his weakness, — as he thought it, — and rather abruptly — if not, indeed, impolitely — ended the conference by touching his horse with the spur and moving off.

He, however, soon had good cause to suspect that he had not conquered himself as thoroughly as he had hoped. He was fain to cast a look behind at the retiring group: then, provoked at having done so, he instantly withdrew his gaze. But again he found himself looking back, and again, until at length, when a turn in the road veiled the party from his view, he betrayed the true state of his feelings by exclaiming, with a gesture well corresponding:

"She never once looked back!"

In fact, every time he had turned to look at her, he had hoped she would vouchsafe to bestow upon him a single glance as a token of transient interest, at least, however slight; and felt really chagrined that she did not.

"Well," thought he, as he rode slowly along, "why should it concern me that she did n't? Why, I can blow all this miserable, nonsensical stuff out of my breast by one hearty sigh." And he suited the action to the thought — "sighing like a furnace."

But even while he did so, and inwardly laughed at his own unrefined conceit, he felt that it was a genuine sigh nevertheless, — such a one as had long been a stranger to that broad breast.

"There now!" he muttered; "it's all over. What a deal of fuss some men do make about a pretty woman — acting the fool for nothing — over head and ears for many a long year — and all that!"

But despite this arrogation of invulnerability, there remained proof enough that the face of the fair stranger clung to his thoughts; for he had gone but little further, before he heaved another deep sigh, — unconsciously this time, — muttering, as he did so:

"What a sad face it was! No doubt, she has lost many friends in that confounded war. The youth I take to be her brother — they have the same cast of features. But

she may have lost one who was more than a brother; and if she —”

The sentence on his lips was left unfinished. He had just then reached the point where he was to diverge from the road into a bridle-path, to make, in a south-western direction, his way through the forest to the encampment.

He reined in suddenly, and sat in listening attitude. He appeared, from the expression of his face and from the direction in which he kept it turned, to have caught faintly some sound coming from the west, not altogether pleasant to his ear; but, being still in doubt, he was marking it intently. It seemed, at first, like the rushing and roaring of some distant body. Presently, it began to assume, to his practised ear, a more distinct sound, not unlike the rapid tramp of feet.

“It is a squad of cavalry,” he growled, instinctively placing his hand on the butt of his pistol, though with no intention of using it just at the moment; then driving his spurs into his horse, he darted into the thicket. “They are pursued!”

So saying, he turned his horse's head back towards the road, — only a deer's leap in distance, — and, taking such a position as would enable him to see, through the dense foliage, any who might pass, — without exposing himself to view, — awaited the approach of the horsemen. Nearer and nearer they came, and louder grew their multitudinous tramp, till, presently, they thundered by with clattering hoof and rattling scabbard, in such a dense cloud of dust, however, which the horses' feet drove up before them into the air, that he could see neither how many, nor of what manner, they were. Yet he had a full view of the leading horseman, and saw that he wore the uniform of a Spanish captain. Assuming that, in such a wide road, the men were riding several abreast, he judged, by the

extent of the veiling cloud, that they would number about twenty.

He seemed to muse a moment, as if in a quandary. It was but a moment.

"They must be rescued!" he said, starting from his reverie.

With this, he wheeled his horse and urged him at full speed down the path,—then, putting to his lips a bugle which hung from his belt, he seemed about to sound it.

Gatewood and his officers had sound signals for certain purposes, and usually carried their bugles with them. In fact, any other system of signalling must have proved futile, owing to the fact that the surface of the country was nearly level and covered by almost unbroken forest. The signal for rallying at the point where the bugle was blown, was, three blasts in quick succession. That for rallying at the encampment, was, an indefinite number at longer intervals,—the person who signalled, unless already at the encampment, blowing as he flew thither. The former usually indicated nothing more serious in the wind than a bear or a wolf to be hunted, and was designed to summon only the few who might be scattered in the vicinity and disposed to join in the sport. The other was of more momentous import,—calling for a general rally, and that with all speed. Its ringing notes sent a wild thrill to the hearts of all who heard them, being, in fact, equivalent to the long-roll of the drum in large armies.

The Chief, however, withdrew the bugle from his lips without sounding it. This doubtless was done, because, on second thought, he recollected that the Spanish troop must still be within hearing of it, and should they catch the sound, they would think it ominous of no good, and being thus put on the alert, would hurry back with the unlucky refugees,—whom, even by this time, they must

have captured,—and so escape across the Sabine before he could collect sufficient force for the rescue — his camp being still several miles distant. He, however, only postponed the signal until he should get beyond their hearing.

CHAPTER IX.

What dangerous action, stood it next to death,
Would I not undergo for one calm look.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Not so hot, good sir.—*Winter's Tale.*

IT being a fine day, and nothing particular on the tapis, or expected, the men of Camp Wildwood had scattered abroad, many of them to distant points; some to hunt, others to fish, and others to course the wild bee from those natural lawn-like openings of small extent, which east of the Sabine began to greet the traveller, increasing both in number and size as he journeyed westward, until, in the region of the Trinity, they opened into Nature's grand flower-fields, dotted here and there with clumps of trees — the delight of all who beheld them. While east of the Sabine the bee's chief difficulty was to find flowers from which to gather his hoard, west of the Trinity his great concern was to find a tree suitable for his habitation and treasury.

In consequence of this general dispersion, Gatewood found, on reaching the camp, only about a dozen men. These were armed, and ready for any emergency, and others were coming in almost every moment in answer to his signal; but all were on foot.

"More men than I want," said the Chief, as he galloped

up to where they stood. "But why are you all on foot? Where are the horses? I need the wings of the wind, this morning."

There were not more than a score of horses kept by Gatewood's band. The nature of the country did not admit of their being used to any great extent, nor was there often a call for more than they had. Moreover, the difficulty of subsisting them made them both inconvenient and unprofitable. Spots suitable for grazing were sparse and of very contracted limits, as may be inferred from what has just been said touching the bee's difficulties in this region.

"The horses have been taken out several miles to graze," said one of the men. "But we can have them here in an hour."

"That will be too late," said Gatewood. Then, after a pause of reflection, "Have the men gone yet, who got permission to hunt by the lake?"

"They started about an hour ago."

"Were they mounted?"

"Yes, Captain; it's too long a tramp on foot."

"If they heard my signal, it's time— Hark! they're coming!"

Several agreed that the sound now heard was that of horses at full speed,—though, muffled as it was by the surrounding wood, others were more cautious in giving their opinion.

So distinct, however, did the hoof-strokes soon become, that there remained no longer any doubt on the subject; and, in a few minutes more, five horsemen were descried coming at a tearing rate along one of the many bridle-paths converging to the camp.

"Are your pistols in order, Wynne?" asked Gatewood, as they reined in before him.

"Prime, Cap'n," replied a stout, grim-looking fellow,—with a great heavy beard, somewhat grizzled, and a voice that rumbled not altogether unlike thunder,—to whom the party seemed to accord, tacitly, a sort of leadership.

"Loaded, too, for none of your small game—are you sure?"

"For the biggest buck that 's goin', and good for *him* at fifty steps, in case Darlin' failed to fetch him."

Here the speaker cast on the long rifle, which he held across the saddle-bow, in his right hand, probably as fond a glance as he ever bestowed on the "darlin'"—whoever she might be—in whose honor the murderous long-range was named.

"Then put up your rifles, and get your sabres. There's a chance to knock the rust off them, if you can get them out of the scabbards."

"Get 'em out o' the scabbards!" echoed Wynne,—as he dismounted and moved off, with the others, towards the tent near at hand, which served as an armory,—but talking back over his shoulder. "Why, Cap'n, they 're as bright as a paynter's eye: we edged 'em off beautiful, yesterday; and if it 's Spanish blood you 're on the hunt of, they 'll leap out o' their sheths 'emselves, without bein' tetched—like a thicket-wolf on to a fawn."

"It *is* Spanish blood," replied the Captain, as the veteran disappeared within the armory.

"Davies—this way!" said Gatewood, calling to his side one of the most resolute, but at the same time the most civilized-looking of the by-standing men. "Take this to my tent," he said, handing him his small-sword, "and bring my sabre. But," he continued in a very low tone, "keep the matter from Filly. You know how it is with her: that 's the reason I don't go myself."

The man walked off rapidly with the sword. In a few minutes he returned, bringing the desired weapon.

"Did she ask any questions?" inquired Gatewood, in a subdued tone, as he girded the deadly weapon about him.

"She did n't see me at all. She was in the front hammock, reading: so I slipped in the back way. She never looked up."

"That's well. Davies, should anything happen to me, you know you are to take her to your mother in town."

"I'll never forget my promise to do that, Captain; and I'll warrant, she'll be well cared for. The old lady took a great fancy to her, you know; and she's just the kindest old lady in the world when she *does* take a fancy."

By this time, the five men had returned.

"Now, follow me!" said Gatewood, as soon as they had mounted. And, with this, he flew along one of the bridle-paths leading in a north-westerly direction, followed by the men in single file.

When they had run at this break-neck rate for about three miles, Wynne, availing himself of a long stretch that was wide enough for two horsemen to ride abreast in the path, spurred suddenly up and laid his animal close alongside Gatewood's.

"Cap'n," said he, in low confidential tones, "what is it that there's such a d——d hurry about? What's to be the end o' this business, anyhow?"

Now, the Chief was a very reticent man, and seldom communicated his counsels to any one except his lieutenants, and not often to them. Wynne, however, was a privileged character, partly from his being one of the most efficient of the men, in the three cardinal virtues of the Neutralians—*hunting, wood-craft, and fighting*; and, also, from his being one of the few who could show a sprinkling of gray about furrowed temples.

But even the old woodsman was not much given to obtruding on his Chief's reticence. On this occasion, how-

ever, Wynne thought he had never before seen him look so "like mad," as he afterwards said, though he had seen him under circumstances of an intensely exciting character. He was afraid this unwonted hot-bloodedness—to whatever cause it was due—might prevent his doing the usual cool thing, which Wynne himself never failed to do, and to enjoin strenuously on others. His motto, so far as it could be gathered from his practice, seemed to be, "If you 've got to spill blood, spill it; but no more 'n you can help, on either side; and more 'specially if it 's *your'n*." His object, therefore, in propounding the query, was, to elicit information on which to volunteer his advice,—he being, as yet, almost wholly in the dark as to the matter in hand. Of course, the Captain could adopt it, or not, as he should see fit.

"When I say 'Follow!' at the beginning of a campaign like this," replied Gatewood, "is n't it *always* 'Charge!' at the end of it?"

"I reckon it is: leastways, ginerally; but it seems to me like as if this 'ere campaign 's *all* charge, and a d——l of a long charge at that. If we go on, this way, much further, our critters 'll be so blowed they won't have any wind in 'em to charge *with*, and we mought git kind o' chawed up, if we ain't too many for 'em when we find 'em."

"They are about three or four to one," said Gatewood, seeming to wake up a little to the true state of the case, and reining in slightly.

By this time, the road became again so narrow, that Wynne had to fall back into single file. The conversation was, nevertheless, kept up under these disadvantages, though in a louder tone, that could, perhaps, be heard by one or two of the other men. Whenever the path would widen out a little, Wynne would spur forward to the Captain's

side, and their tones would again become inaudible to those in the rear.

"Then, I say, we 'd better take it a little bit cooler 'n this."

"But there 's no time to lose," said the Captain. "Wynne, I reckon I may as well tell you all about this thing, and ask your advice: I may want it before we get back."

"Better late 'n never," thought Wynne. "Well, Cap'n," said he, "I b'lieve I *have* helped to improve your campaigns oncet or twicet, afore now."

"So you have—yes, a dozen times. Well, the state of the case is just this: Only a few minutes before you heard me blow, I met, on the Natchitoches road, about a mile this side of the lake, a party of five refugees—a lady among them."

"Aha! so there 's a woman mixed up with it," thought Wynne; "and that 's just what 's the matter. He always gives that sect a wide berth, 'cept when they 're hard put to it. He don't love 'em overly, but he 'll fight for 'em like mad. But seems now like as if he 's crazier 'n there 's any use for."

Of course the veteran thought all this in a single moment, and did not, in consequence of the mental episode, lose a jot of what the Captain was saying.

"Just after I turned off the road," the latter continued, "I saw a squadron of Spanish cavalry—about twenty—dash by at full speed, evidently in pursuit of them. They must have been captured but a few minutes afterwards. Now, this path, you know, comes into the main road, a few rods this side of the Sabine ferry. I propose to get there before them; then to turn about eastwardly, and sweep the road until we meet them. You know, as well as I do, what comes next. Now, can you improve that plan? It has the merit, at least, of simplicity."

"I think I can tetch it up, and make it look a leetle han'somer 'n that," replied Wynne, after a brief space of thought. "I like it all well enough till we git to the road — leastways, all 'cept blowin' the critters so bad. I think *that* kind o' risky. But I don't like that idee o' your'n, Cap'n, sweeping back, that a way, and half a dozen men charging twenty reg'lar Spaniards fair and square up, in a big road. It 'll cost blood."

"Of course, it will," replied the Chief, slightly irritated; "and if you can plan it so that it *won't* cost blood, suppose you do it."

"I can easy fix it," said the veteran, "so it won't cost so much of our'n, and more o' their'n."

"That 's very desirable — how would you do it?" said the Captain, evidently losing his sharpness of manner, and becoming interested.

"Well, Cap'n, I 'd take it Injin fashion."

"That 's a mean, sneaking way of fighting, Wynne."

"Not quite so mean, I reckon, as for the most of us to have to go under, — and then let 'em git the gal, to boot."

Wynne made this last remark upon the assumption that "the gal" was the main object with Gatewood; and it is quite probable he judged correctly.

"Sure enough they *might* do that. Well, we 'll lay an ambuscade, then."

"We 've got 'em now, sure 's h-ll!" thought Wynne. "You see, Cap'n," said he, "we fellows don't often miss when we draw a bead, all standin'. It's different, though, dashin' up, full run. We 'll pick our men; and when the first smoke clears away, there 'll be six less of 'em for our second shot; and then, mebbly, ten less (that 's jist half, you see, if there 's the round twenty of 'em) for the sabre, and none of our'n down yit. And it 's but the fair thing, too, when there 's three to one."

"To be sure it is, Wynne. I have never hesitated to adopt that very plan when I could,—even where I have not been outnumbered by the enemy. But, really, I, somehow, did n't think of it this time. I don't believe my brain is very cool and clear this morning, if the truth was known."

"That's jist what I was thinking, Cap'n; and I was tryin' to git you back to your same old cool again. I don't b'lieve I ever saw you flustered afore."

"Well it's all right now," said the Chief.

CHAPTER X.

I would not be in some of your coats for twopence.—*Twelfth Night*.

Truly, sir, I would advise you to clap into your prayers.

Measure for Measure.

Revenge to me is sweeter far than life.—*The Witch of Edmonton.*

THE first thing, on reaching the road, was to assure themselves that the pursuing Spaniards had not yet returned. This, to Wynne, skilled woodsman as he was, was no difficult matter. On a mere glance at the surface of the highway, he pronounced the intruders still on the Neutral Ground.

They forthwith selected for their ambush, a point where the road made a short semicircular sweep, to wind around a ravine; then stationed themselves among the tangled growth, in the concavity of the bend, so as to be able, as the military phrase goes, to move on shorter lines than the enemy; or, as Wynne expressed it, with characteristic disregard alike of elegance and technicalities, "to git the inside track on 'em."

Scarcely were they in position, when they heard the familiar tramp of advancing cavalry. Gatewood, for obvious reasons, had not dismounted his little band. The well-trained horses, which, by this time, had recovered their wind, stood like statues behind the leafy cover, and only by the excited gleam of their eyes did they betray an inkling of what was about to happen.

Presently, the Spaniards entered the bend of the road, and became visible to the ambush through the many little natural windows afforded by the foliage, that were so soon to serve, also, as embrasures through which to point the deadly tube, and pour the deadly shot.

As the cavalcade approached, their enemies, being close upon the road, could see that its military part marched three abreast, in two squads of about equal numbers. Between these squads, and about ten paces from each, moved the captured party,—in much the same order as when Gatewood met them,—and flanked, on either side, by an officer. Indeed, the only change which the Chief could discern, showed itself in the present pitiable plight of the youth. Not only was he disarmed, but his hands were tied behind him; and as, in this helpless condition, it would have been impossible for him to guide his horse, the animal had been secured, by means of the rein, to the priest's bit. The lady's face could not be seen: her head was bowed down upon her hand, and she seemed to be weeping.

At this time they were moving no faster than a brisk walk. Doubtless, they had been making greater speed; but inasmuch as they had penetrated so far into the Neutral Ground, and had come again so near their own soil, without a show of danger, they perhaps thought it useless to hurry up any longer, and far more becoming to enter the territory of his most serene Majesty with more serenity

than a precipitate flight would present. Or, perhaps, they did not fully comprehend and appreciate the peculiar perils of the Neutral Ground. This, indeed, would seem to have been the true state of the case, from the fact of their bringing away with them the unwieldy pack-mules, which must have materially retarded their progress. Had they left these behind, and made all haste to get back to their own country, no ambush would have been awaiting them here. But, as it was, Spanish avarice outweighed even Spanish prudence, and here they were, where, perhaps, neither prudence nor avarice would long avail them.

The first intimation they had of danger, was the startling sound of six pistol-shots piercing their ears, and the ghastly and fearful spectacle shocking their vision, of four of the front squad rolling from their saddles, and two more spurring off at full speed, evidently wounded. The officers were not picked off with the rest, for the very good reason that they were in range with the prisoners, and the lives of the latter would thereby have been endangered.

The rear squad, after wildly discharging a volley into the invisible ambush, with no more serious damage than slightly wounding one man and one or two horses, dashed forward among the prisoners and became so mixed up with them — purposely, perhaps — that the second volley from the Neutralians — which Wynne, in the nice calculation already figured up by him on the route, expected would reduce them “to jist one half, if there ’s the round twenty of ’em” — could not be availed of.

Gatewood, seeing instantly this state of things, ordered his men to reserve their remaining shot, and close, man to man, with the sabre, — which was done, in dashing style. He himself singled out the Captain of the troop, who, however, was on the far side of the road, so that, in order to reach him, the Chief was obliged first to cut down a Span-

iard, who crossed him, and then to thrust aside, by charging upon them, the two pack-mules, which stood, fixed and trembling, directly in his path.

He did not reach his foe a moment too soon; for he found him in the dastardly act of trying to murder, in cold blood, the helpless youth, who not only had his hands tied behind him, but had been disarmed. The monster had already struck at him, but, in order to avoid the blow, he had leaped from his horse; and, in doing so, his back being, for a moment, turned towards his enemy, the weapon descended between his arms, and touching, with the very point, the cord which bound his wrists together, severed it clearly. Whereupon the youth, finding himself free, instead of making off, — as he had intended doing, — snatched a sabre from one of the dying Spaniards who lay upon the ground, and turned violently upon his foe. But the latter, being still mounted, had greatly the advantage in his elevated position, and would, no doubt, have soon dispatched the youth. Meanwhile, however, Gatewood had made his way to the spot; and, parrying a deadly blow aimed at the youth, ran his sabre, almost to the hilt, into and through the breast of the Spaniard, who rolled to the ground a corpse.

By this time, the crowd was pretty well thinned out. The spirited youth finding his friend had taken the truculent Captain entirely off his hands, turned about, and atoned for his constrained inactivity in the first part of the *melée*, by attacking a dismounted Spaniard, much his superior in strength, and killing him after a severe struggle.

The priest, — whose horse had been shot from under him, — apparently forgetful of his ghostly office, instead of hastening to offer the consolations of extreme unction to the souls that were being disembodied all around him, fell to with a will, and a pistol which he snatched up from the ground,

and in the twinkling of an eye, released from all earthly bondage a grim devil of a Gachupin, who was striving, with his sword, to do the same office upon one of the Neutral Ground boys.

Wynne and his fellow-freebooters, as may readily be believed, had killed and disabled their share. One or two had escaped on foot to the bushes. So that there were only two or three left as prisoners.

The Mexican man and woman were missing; but, on search being made for them, they were discovered behind the pack of one of the mules, which had been shot dead by some random bullet, and had staggered off the road before falling. They were crouched on the leeward side thereof, quite safe from the storm.

As soon as Gatewood had settled accounts with the Captain, he had turned about for another foe. Instead, however, of finding a foe, he turned just in time to catch in his arms the lady; who, having sat her horse in the middle of the road during those few terrible moments, too horrified to flee from the surrounding perils, or even to utter a scream, now fainted away, and, but for his timely aid, must have fallen to the ground. Dismounting, he bore her to the roadside, and, laying her gently on the sward, left her in charge of his Reverence, who hastened to her side.

Whilst this more peaceful scene was being enacted, Wynne, observing that the young man—apparently resolved to make up what time he had lost during the first onset—was about to put an end to one of the Spaniards, who had no arms with which to defend himself, struck up the descending weapon with his sabre.

“Young gent!” said he coolly, “this here fight’s over now. No cold blood, if you *please*.”

The young man’s frenzied heat was so thoroughly

calmed down by the quiet tone and manner of the veteran, that he not only desisted at once from his murderous intention, but appeared quite overcome with confusion, as he turned away and sheathed his sword.

One of the Neutralians was killed, and three others were slightly wounded. Wynne, somehow or other, got a considerable scratch behind, which being fain to conceal, he said nothing about it,—although it must have smarted him a good deal,—hoping it would not be discovered, as, in that case, it would probably be made—owing to its particular locality—the subject of an ugly joke, by the other men.

He and the three surviving men were standing in a group apart from the rest of the party, talking over the fight. Two of them were displaying their wounds, and seemed rather proud of them, as they related the manner in which they were received. Wynne, with an unscathed front,—which he managed to keep towards them whilst discussing the matter,—was saying, in rather a derogatory tone:

“Boys, it ain’t the gittin’ of wounds that ’s to be proud of, as I ’ve always told ye: it ’s keepin’ clare of ’em that ’s the thing. It ’s a heap wuss on the inemy, and easier on ourse’ves.”

“Somehow or ’nother, you ’re always moughty lucky, Wynne,” said one of his companions.

“Yes, boys—as I jist now said, the raal thing is, to git through without gittin’ hurt at all. Any d——d greeny can git a vein sprung, if he ’s a mind to.”

One of them, however, chancing to notice his persistent maintenance of one position while the rest were constantly shifting about in free and easy style, and not knowing exactly how to account for this unwonted stiffness, took it into his suspicious and waggish head to investigate the

matter *a posteriori*. No sooner, however, did he commence to walk around the grim veteran, for the purpose of inspecting in that quarter, than the latter began to make a corresponding gyration, on a pivot, as it were. This confirming the wag's suspicions of something wrong, he continued his circumambulation.

This movement soon revolving Wynne far enough to expose his rear to the others, discovered to them, through a long, clean cut in his nether garments, the little trickling stream which he was so jealously endeavoring to guard from observation. Of course, an uproarious laugh, at his expense, was the immediate consequence—an opportunity to run the rig upon Wynne being by no means an every-day affair, and not to be foregone.

"Boys," said the veteran, nothing abashed, and examining now, with his hand, for the first time, the extent of the injury, "I s'pose you 're pokin' fun at me 'cause I got my hurt in my behind-parts, instead o' before, like your'n. But I don't see what's to hinder 'most anybody from gittin' hurt in the rare, now and then. A fellow can't see what's goin' on thar—so thar's no chance to fend off. But, boys, thar's no excuse gittin' hurt in front, whar you can see exac'ly what the inemy's doin'. This cut behind here, in my buckskins and so on, was made while I was tryin' to do the right thing in front. It was done by a stray whisk of some fellow's edge-tool, while he was handlin' of it rather careless. Bein' as it come unbeknowns to me, how in the devil was I to fend off, I'd like to know?"

This, as Wynne probably intended it should, only made the mirth more explosive.

CHAPTER XI.

Madam, this service have I done for you,
To hazard life and rescue you.

• • • • •
Vouchsafe me, for my meed, but one fair look.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

I am angling now,
Though you perceive me not how I give line.

Much Ado About Nothing.

MEANWHILE, a very different scene was going forward in another part of this narrow field.

No sooner had the priest seen that the young lady was reviving from her swoon, than he hurried to Gatewood,—who had been standing, a little apart, evidently an interested spectator of their proceedings,—and at once, with all the thorough politeness of a man of the world, introduced himself as the Padre Clemente Delgado, of San Antonio; and then, as openly and as politely, inquired by what name he should have the honor to address him.

“My name, Padre, is Gatewood,” replied the chief.

“Captain Gatewood,” said the priest, leading him (nothing loth) forward to where the lady lay, with her head by this time on her brother’s knee, “allow me to introduce to you to my nephew, Don Juan Delgado—and his sister, the Señorita Isabella.”

Young Delgado half rose from his cramped position, and most cordially shook the Captain’s hand.

“Excuse my rising,” said the lady, in a faint, sweet voice, at the same time raising herself to her elbow and extending her hand. “I am yet too weak for that.”

Is it any wonder that the stern Captain’s cheek was a trifle redder for the touch of that soft hand?

How it came about that these Creole Spaniards could speak English almost as well as their own language, shall appear in due time.

"Isabella," said the priest, "it is to this gentleman mainly that we are indebted for our rescue."

"Oh, sir," said she, "I shall never be able to thank you enough. You don't know the half your brave comrades and yourself have done for us. You saved, with your own hand, my dear brother's life; for I saw you kill the man who was about to murder him in cold blood. But you do not know that the fiend had told my brother, only a few moments before, that he should be hung in presence of my uncle and myself, as soon as we should reach the west bank of the Sabine. Oh, how dreadful!"

At the bare thought of witnessing such a spectacle, the lady's cheek, which had begun to show the flush of reaction, grew exceedingly pale again, and she would, no doubt, have relapsed into a swooning condition, had she not sunk back on the grass — her head still resting on her brother's lap.

Soon, however, regaining her previous degree of strength, she again propped herself on her elbow.

"I hope," said she, casting a sad, inquiring look at the Captain, "none of your noble little band were killed."

"There lies one, Señorita, who will never get up again," replied the Chief, indicating, by a glance, the direction of the body.

"Poor fellow!" she exclaimed, as her eye followed the Captain's. "He died for us!"

"Uncle, did you shrive him?" she said in Spanish, after a brief silence.

"No, Isabella," replied the priest, in the same tongue; "it was impossible — he was killed dead on the spot."

"Ah me! war is a sad thing!" she said, with a deep

sigh. "Captain Gatewood," she went on in English, "were any of your men wounded, who need attention? I am not unskilled in dressing wounds; I have had a good deal to do with them in our army. Perhaps I could —"

"None badly hurt," replied the Captain, touching his hat and bowing slightly. "Besides, I have a man in camp who calls himself *Doctor*. I believe he is capable of attending to all ordinary cases. So, we can dispense with those kind attentions which your feeble condition would scarcely justify. Your offer, however, is none the less appreciated, because declined."

"Moreover," resumed the Captain, after a pause, "I have to suggest, for your consideration, gentlemen, that, as soon as the Señorita is able, you should be on the move. This is not, by any means, the safest place in the world, notwithstanding our victory seems so complete. There is a considerable body of Spanish troops only a mile distant, on the west bank of the river; and as several of our enemies escaped in that direction, they may soon be down upon us with a great force, if we remain here."

"Mercy on us!" exclaimed the lady, shuddering, as she thought what scenes might be enacted again, if they tarried. "I am able to move now — this very moment!"

With this, she rose to her feet, though with some difficulty.

"Let us, for heaven's sake," she said, "stay no longer in this dreadful spot."

When Gatewood commenced his warning of the new dangers to which they were exposed, the worthy Padre was just about stepping away to give what spiritual consolation he might, to one or two dying Gachupins, who were writhing and groaning near at hand; and, if their frame of mind should justify it, to administer to them the holy viaticum, to the end that, having been devils long enough in this world, they should not continue to be such

in the next. One of these, he felt more than ordinary obligations to assist in that way,—his recent dealings with him having been of a nature very unusual, not to say delicate, for a priest. In short, this was the fellow whom he had shot down with his own hand. Having himself given him his quietus—perhaps, anticipated the gallows by several years, during which time the wretch might possibly have amended his life—his Reverence felt doubly bound to provide him with a passport that should take him through the right gate, when it should be known in the other world who had sent him thither. Gatewood's last words, however, so damped the ecclesiastical ardor, that he decided to let the poor sinner take his chance, as he was; and at once set himself about preparing to place a greater distance between his own party and the merciless foe, in whose hands it was but too evident that even a priest could, by no means, feel safe.

Gatewood now addressed himself to the three prisoners, who were bestowing on their wounded comrades what attention they could.

"You are welcome to go free," he said, in Spanish,—of which he had a very respectable knowledge,—“but I must emphatically advise you never again to set foot this side the Sabine, except it be to minister to your wounded friends here, or to bear them away to your own people. Of course, you will bury your own dead.”

"Wynne," said he, next,—as he advanced towards the hilarious group above described,—“you will see that our unfortunate friend, there, is properly buried.”

"We'll try to do the right thing by Girdle, Cap'n, since he's hit his last lick," replied the old freebooter, with something wondrous like compassion in the tones of his deep voice.

"Then," pursued the Chief, "after concealing in the

thicket the arms that are lying about, and the horses, with their equipments, you will hurry in to camp, and let the Lieutenant know: he is to bring half our force up, at once, to guard the road, as near this point as he can find a good camping-place. Tell him, he will suffer no more refugees to be followed into our territory under any circumstances whatever."

By Gatewood's orders, his men now assisted the Mexican in transferring the pack from the dead mule to one of the other mules,—the delighted Mexican himself being promoted to the back of one of the captured horses.

Whilst this transfer was going on, Gatewood informed the rescued party that, owing to the distance, it would be impossible for them to reach Natchitoches that night, especially after the fatigues they had already undergone. And, as there was no intermediate stopping-place, he proposed that they should consent to lodge in a house which he had just built, he said, and furnished for himself. He added the information, that it had never yet been occupied, and that it stood about midway on the route to town.

To this proposition—worn down, as they were, by the severity of their trials, no less than by the physical strain to which they had so long been subjected—they consented readily, and with no slight show of gratitude.

"The house is a considerable distance off the road," said Gatewood, "and accessible only by a bridle-path, which you could not follow without great difficulty, if at all. If you will accept my services, however, I will do myself the honor to guide you to the spot."

This last offer being accepted, the whole party mounted and moved off in pairs; the young lady and her brother taking the lead. The Mexican and his wife—for such the woman proved to be—with their charge, came next; for they had been left so nervous by the recent conflict, that

they could not be persuaded to bring up the rear—a duty which, therefore, fell to the lot of Gatewood and the priest.

The latter, not knowing what might again turn up of a sinister nature, had taken the precaution to secure, from among the slain, a belt containing pistols and a sword, and had girded the same about him, outside his ecclesiastical robe; so that he had lost, in a measure, his resemblance to the heavenly messenger that he was, bearing tidings of “peace on earth, and good will to men.” He looked, indeed, far more as if commissioned to carry out that other motto, “Peaceably, if we can—forcibly, if we must;” which, while it whispers full softly to us of heaven, smells, at times, loudly enough of hell and gunpowder to have been compounded by the grand Adversary himself, for the use of his special vicegerents on earth—tyrants—both monocrats and oligarchs.

On the route, the Señorita and her brother—who had been fortunate enough to recover his own sword and pistols, which hung again at his belt—conversed, in Spanish, of the dangers they had escaped, and of the future prospects of the patriot cause, as well as of their own individual hopes and fears.

“If we ever get back to San Antonio,” said he, as the colloquy warmed, “what debts of vengeance will I have to pay!”

“Brother,” replied the lady, “I would rather hear you talk more of the cause, and less of vengeance.”

“Not talk of vengeance!” he exclaimed, his brow disturbed by a scowl, doubtless intended far more for certain invisible foes than for his gentle sister. “*I* not talk of it? Not even *talk* of that which I hope so soon to *act*? Why, Isabella! have you then forgotten our poor father?”

“Oh, no—Juan!”

“Have you forgotten what our mother was forced to witness before she died?”

"Oh, no — no!"

"Have you forgotten, that, at this very moment, I should be feeding the buzzards, from a gibbet, but for —"

The sentence was broken off by the lady bursting into tears.

"Oh, do not speak of those dreadful things!" she cried.

"Then for God's sake let me speak of others, which I have sworn to do more than *speak* of, if victory ever hovers around our standard again. Thus far, I have fought only for the cause. But now, I will tell you, Isabella, — I would rather be avenged on those fiends, than that all Mexico should be free. It was as much as I could do, to keep my hands off the prisoners we took in this fight. Had they been officers, I should have cut their throats on the spot."

As there was no reply made to these last remarks, the young man said nothing further, and the conversation ceased.

The Mexican and his spouse had still remaining in them too much of the paralyzing influence of terror to wag their tongues to any tune whatever, except such occasional expletives as were necessary to keep the pack-animals at their best gait; and the utterance of even these few uncouth words was entirely mechanical, or they had, most probably, not been uttered.

Gatewood and his Reverence discussed politics and war exclusively. The indefatigable Padre elicited from his companion more information touching himself, his men, his mode of life, his relations with the two governments between which he was situated, and the amount of force under his command, than that Chief had ever before deigned to impart to any one person since he had held sway in Neutralia. Nor is it at all likely he would have been so communicative on this occasion, but that he already knew pretty well what his Reverence was after in propounding

his interrogatories—the looking, namely, for an opportunity to advance the interests of the discomfited patriots—and that he himself, when the auspicious time should arrive, might expect of his querist certain favors tending to the furtherance of his own individual interests in a particular direction—the holy man's influence, he made no doubt, having great weight in that quarter.

It must not, however, be supposed, for a moment, that the usually reticent Chief told all—or even the half—about himself. He, in fact, told only such things as might not tend to disparage him in the good man's eyes. Without once declining to answer a query, yet never descending to downright falsehood, he managed to glose things over, to reduce deeds of questionable morality to a fair seeming, and to round off into a shapely form—if not into the true wave-line of moral beauty—certain ugly salient points, so that he of the alb set him down, in a corner of his heart, as a hero without a cause—a deficiency which he thought could easily enough be supplied.

Gatewood, for his part, as soon as he had posted the Padre as fully as he dare do with regard to himself, set about inquiring into Mexican affairs, with a zeal altogether beyond his wont. It is perhaps not too much to say, that, during the next half hour, he obtained, in this way, more information on these matters than he had before done from all sources since the breaking out of the revolution—or, indeed, had cared to do. The intensity of his present interest in poor Mexico's welfare seemed to be proportioned to the extreme suddenness with which it had sprung up. By the time they had reached the point where Gatewood's services were needed to lead the party through the dense timber, his well-known prejudices against the priesthood may be said to have quite died out; while the righteous indignation which his Reverence had nursed, during his

whole life, and had faithfully inculcated upon others to nurse, against those who could not see as distinctly as they might, the difference betwixt *meum* and *tuum*, had, in this one case, at least, come to nought.

When they reached the point where the path which they were to pursue diverged from the road, Gatewood assumed the personal direction of the party.

"Now, if you will but follow me along this path," he said, "your fatigues will soon be ended for the day."

CHAPTER XII.

Love hath chas'd sleep from my enthralled eyes.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

I stalk about her door,

Like a strange soul upon the Stygian bank,

Staying for waftage.

Troilus and Cressida.

AFTER riding a mile or two, they came, about dark, to a more open place in the wood; the timber having apparently been trimmed away and thinned out. They now saw, a few rods ahead, a fire on the ground, and could distinguish the forms of two men sitting near it. These, on hearing the approaching steps, rose and came forward.

"Those are the men I left here to guard the premises," explained Gatewood.

As soon as the two men recognized and saluted their Chief, they returned to their seats on the ground, and, after their first surprise was over, took little further notice of the party.

By this time, it was too dark, here among the trees, to

distinguish more than the outlines of a double, one-story house, with a covered way connecting the two portions. The ends of this passage-way were entirely open to the outer air. This, a common plan of building in that latitude, was designed not only to afford a convenient place to spread the meal, but, also, to catch the refreshing breezes as they flew.

Whatever points of attraction the place may have presented, they could not, at that late hour, be recognized. Nor is it probable they would have been duly appreciated, even had enough daylight remained to display them to advantage; for the travellers were so completely worn out, that they all sought their several places of rest for the night, without even waiting for anything to stay their hunger, although this must have been considerable, and although the host assured them that there was the where-withal on the premises to provide a very good supper, if they would only have patience.

The Señorita was shown to a comfortable bed in a room by herself. Two mattresses, on the floor of the only other apartment, fell to the lot of the Padre and his nephew. The Mexican couple, as soon as they could unpack the animals, and pitch the tent which composed part of their load, crept in on their customary blankets,—and soon the entire party were wrapped in that profound slumber, which, in a perfectly healthy person, always succeeds excessive fatigue—except under certain circumstances, presently to be most signally instanced.

The Captain, after directing the men to take care of the horses, set about regaling himself on the remains of the supper, which they had just finished discussing, consisting of bread and honey, together with some dried venison. He then brought away from the porch a buffalo-robe, and, spreading it beneath a tree, and divesting himself only of

his coat and belt, lay down, and endeavored to compose himself to sleep. Vain, however, were his efforts. To be sure, the physical man was ready and willing enough, but there seemed to be some disquieting mental element, which, rebelling against the drowsy god, scorned his fetters.

Rarely, indeed, was it that this man, with his grandly healthy physique, had to woo long for the recuperative favors of sleep. It mattered little how exciting had been the environments of the day; he could turn, fresh from the stirring chase, or the din of arms, to the bare earth, with a surety of speedy repose.

It was, however, to no purpose that he now closed his eyes and lay quiet: the mind still walked abroad. To no purpose that he essayed to compromise the state of things, by tossing and turning about in harmony with the mental workings: they would not be lulled by such rocking. To no purpose that he threw out, one by one, his brawny limbs, for coolness, and turned his burning brow to the breeze, for relief.

For many long hours he lay with the unwonted fever tingling through his veins; and if he slept at last, it was unconsciously. His thoughts ran so imperceptibly into tangible dreams; and, when he woke, the dreams glided so naturally back into thoughts not a whit more tangible, that he knew not when he had passed, and repassed, the misty barrier between the sleeping and waking worlds. The burden alike of all those thoughts and dreams was the sweet face he had, that morning, encountered on the highway,—the soft, rounded form he had so lately borne in his arms.

About midnight the last-quarter moon rose, making everything about these premises much more distinct. Among other objects to have been then and there seen,

was the stricken Captain, walking to and fro beneath the majestic trees. What little sleep he had been able to snatch had, long ago, flown his eyelids, and these had lifted, in good, wide earnest, to all the reality of his new situation. In the reaction which now took place, he felt chagrined — perhaps I may venture to say disgusted — with himself, partly on account of a very foolish resolution he had made, years ago, never to suffer his feelings to get into their present pitiable plight — as he thought it, or affected to think it — and partly for reasons which shall hereinafter appear.

For several hours did he continue his lonely promenade and his humiliating cogitations, like a proud lion chafing even while he suffers the toiler's net to close about his free limbs. Two or three times did he betake himself to his rude bed, — perhaps mechanically, for, no sooner did he find himself without the motion which had aided in working off some of his gathering nervousness, than he would spring up again and resume his strides with atoning energy.

"I will go back to camp at once, and never see these strangers again," thought he, snatching up his coat, and hastily putting it on. "That's the way to end this — whatever it is."

Poor, weak creature — though at times so mighty in his manliness — affecting not to know what *this* was!

Here, I am very loth to record of Captain Gatewood a joke of so serious a nature, that, had his stoical men ever found it out, would doubtless have lessened him materially in their estimation. Inasmuch, however, as it is altogether likely that not a single one of them is now living, or, if living, is, long since, in his dotage and will not be able to appreciate the joke, — and, moreover, as the recording thereof appertains to my duty as a faithful chronicler of events that transpired in the evanescent kingdom of Neu-

tralia,—I do not very clearly see how I am to shirk that duty.

In fact, now that I come to think the matter over again, this incident, trivial as it may seem, is the hinge, as it were, on which my whole narrative turns; for, had it not occurred, the Captain would never have seen the Señorita again,—in which case this story would have been rendered entirely too barren and uninteresting to come before you, the gentle reader.

What I hint of, then, is neither more nor less than an instance of the Chief's absent-mindedness; which, considering the cause of it, no less than its extent, would possibly have sufficed to depose him from absolute sway in his dominions. And it will do more to show the reader into what a forlorn condition this grim bandit was lapsing, and that, too, at no very tardy rate—in fact, had already lapsed—than whole pages, devoted to the dreary topic, could possibly effect.

Having resolved to fly to Camp Wildwood for safety from this new danger, he girded his armed belt about him, and struck off through the woods, *on foot*, exclaiming, as he did so:

“Never will I set eye on her again—for if I do, I shall henceforth be her vassal, and follow her to the ends of the earth.”

He had gone some two miles, with rapid stride, when he stopped short in his path.

“My horse! By the eternal powers! I’ve forgotten my horse,” he exclaimed, bringing his fist down upon the air with a force which, but for the accompanying oath, would well have become some fashionably thundering pulpit-orator. “Abstracted—mazed—my very wits in riot—I do verily believe.”

Now, it is but simple justice to the bewildered Captain,

to say, that he travelled much oftener on foot than on horseback through these haunts, because they were densely timbered, and could, in that way, be much more easily threaded, and the short cuts be more readily availed of. Force of habit, therefore, had much to do with his forgetting his horse on the present occasion,—though the peculiar state of the inner man had undoubtedly its share of influence. One thing is certain, that he was never before guilty of such a gross blunder, nor of anything akin to it.

“It’s very clear I must return.” He thus mused, as he stood halting between two opinions. “It would be a pretty story, indeed, to go the round of camp. ‘The Captain forgot his horse.’ ‘Walked ten miles before he found it out.’ ‘Why, he’s crazy—that’s just the long and short of it.’ This is what they will say. And then the worst of it is, they may guess at the cause of it all. ‘What! a woman upset *him*? Never.’ ‘You may pooh-pooh as much as you please, but I tell you *it’s so*.’ ‘How changed he must be, then!’ ‘Changed! I rather reckon he *is* changed. Why, he just ain’t the same man.’

“Yes—I must go back. But, then, there are the two boys. They’ll be stirring by the time I get there; and what, in heaven’s name, would they think, to see me coming in at peep of day? How account to *them*?

“Ah, yes—I have it now: happy thought! It’s about the hour for game; I see the day is just breaking. A deer on the lake-shore. No—that’s rather uncertain. The turkey-roost, then, that I passed a few rods back: how will that do? The very thing! I’ll take in, with me, a brace of fine fat gobblers, for breakfast. And who’ll suspect I got what I did n’t go in search of?” So musing, he retraced his steps.

“But, then,” thought he, “I shall again come under the spell of those bewitching eyes.” On thinking of this, he

stopped. Only for a moment, however. "But I know not"—here he started off again—"whether to be glad or grieved for *that*. Well, be it so, since fate so wills it.—Poor Filly! you little know, you sweet little pet! what a rival you are to have in these coming days. I thought I liked Filly about as much as I could ever like anybody. But—pshaw!"

When he reached the turkey-roost, he could see the birds sitting aloft, in fancied security; but there was not yet quite daylight enough in the dense woods to afford him a sure aim. He, therefore, instead of waiting for more light from that source, availed himself of the moon, which was sailing aloft, about one-fourth of its allotted distance across the heavens.

This is a very common device among frontiersmen,—sometimes even in the middle of the night,—the time being chosen according to the position of the moon. Gatewood, by shifting his own position to suit, put one of the largest and plumpest-looking of his intended victims exactly between himself and the orb above, and, drawing a pistol, brought him to the ground, with scarcely a flap of the wings. This roost having, probably, never before been fired into, nearly all the birds remained *in situ*; so, the Captain had no trouble in securing another. Then, connecting their legs by means of a piece of bark stripped from a young pecan shoot, he swung them over his shoulder and resumed his way.

As he strode up to the house, he found the Mexican and his wife,—who had probably been awakened thus early by the gnawings of hunger after their long fast,—conferring with the two men, who understood a little Spanish. In fact, all the Neutralians, for their own convenience, had managed to pick up a more or less imperfect knowledge of that tongue. The conversation which was going on touched

the amount and quality of raw material available for the morning meal, and its whereabouts; the Mexicans, wishing, they said, to prepare breakfast for all concerned.

“Dress these fowls,” said Gatewood, laying the same on the leaves before the Mexicans. “Breadstuffs and coffee you ’ll find in the house.”

“Boys,” said he, — though he turned to the *men*, as he said it, — “can’t you manage to catch some fish in the lake?”

“If we only had the tackle, Captain.”

“You ’ll find that in the boat.”

The men moved off at once toward the lake, while their Chief, seeking again his bed under the trees, actually succeeded in getting an hour or two of good, sound sleep. The balmy morning air, in which he had been so freely circulating, seemed to have quieted, a little, the tumult of his breast.

CHAPTER XIII.

I like this place,
And willingly could waste my time in it. — *Measure for Measure*.

There is a fair behaviour in thee, Captain,
And though that nature with a beauteous wall
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee

I will believe thou hast a mind that suits

With this thy fair and outward character. — *Twelfth Night*.

Bait the hook well: this fish will bite. — *Much Ado About Nothing*.

THE travellers did not wake until Stefanita, the Mexican woman, knocked at their respective doors, announcing breakfast ready to be dished. It being a mild autumn morning, she had spread the table beneath the trees, so that, when they all sat down to the repast, a good opportunity presented to view their surroundings.

“What a beautiful prospect you have here, Captain Gatewood,” exclaimed the Señorita, after the morning greeting, as she seated herself and looked down and out upon the lake near at hand, — brought into pretty full view, from that elevated point, by a judicious trimming of the intervening timber.

“Yes, Señorita,” replied the Chief; “the prospect is a fine one; though this country, being so nearly level as it is, affords but few attractive situations — at least to any one accustomed to a more diversified surface. I think that, for beauty and convenience combined, this is preferable to any between the Red and the Sabine. I believe I know almost every foot of territory between the two rivers, and I selected this over them all without any hesitation.”

That was truly a beautiful view before them; and the lady, good as her physical appetite must have been, seemed to forget her hunger for some minutes, and to be revelling in the æsthetic feast spread before her.

The length of the lake, from the northern extremity, at which the house was situated, to the farthest southern limit, was probably six miles; its width, made very irregular by innumerable indentations of the land, varied from half a mile to three miles. The woods girded it about in one unbroken circuit, and adapted their embrace to every freakish meander of its shore. Water-loving cypresses composed its immediate fringe, to the exclusion of all other kinds of trees, touching gently its face with their dark drooping boughs, like a mother soothing her nursling to rest.

Back of this gloomy growth, and rising gradually above it as the ground became more elevated further from the lake, stood a variety of deciduous trees still retaining their leaves, — all the more lovely from their gorgeous autumn hues.

The sun had risen high enough to touch the leafy slope

of the western shore, and impinged so brightly upon the leaves as to make them glow and fairly kindle until, indeed, you would almost have thought the gold and crimson would start into flame.

There being, at this early hour, not a breath of air to ruffle the lake, its glassy surface doubled this mass of gorgeous foliage with such perfect distinctness in all its minutest details, that it was impossible for the nicest eye to draw the line dividing the real object from its image in the water.

Still further variety was afforded by the many indentations of the shore; while numerous little cypress-grown islands, some isolated, others in clusters, seemed like so many emeralds set in the facet of a diamond — itself being set around with emerald, and ruby, and gold.

“Oh, uncle!” said Isabella, starting abruptly from the survey which had, for a few minutes, been engrossing her attention, to the exclusion of her speech, “don’t you think we might find some such place for our sojourn in this region, instead of going into the town? I should like it so much better; and we all would, I think.”

This suggestion was made on the impulse of the moment, and without the most remote intention of conveying any sort of hint whatever to their guest. The fair speaker was, therefore, perceptibly confused when the latter said, without awaiting the priest’s reply:

“When the Señorita spoke, I was just about to submit a proposition bearing on that very point. In fact, I thought of doing so yesterday, and concluded to defer it only because you would all be better prepared to entertain it after seeing for yourselves these premises and their surroundings. This house is entirely at your service, from this moment, with everything in it, — just as long as you choose to stay here.”

"Captain, I did not mean — I only meant —" began the lady, coloring.

"I know exactly how it was," said Gatewood, as she hesitated. "You merely meant, that if an eligible place could be found, you would prefer it to the town; and you *did n't* mean to give the least hint in the world. In other words," continued he, smiling, as though he considered her mistake as a rather good little joke at her expense, "you not only meant all you said, but you said all you meant. And allow me to hope that your merely *seeming* to give a hint, when we all know that not the shadow of one was intended, may not weigh to determine you against this offer, which I make in good faith."

The young man glanced at his uncle, as though he thought it the latter's place to answer, but seeing that he looked much more as if revolving the proposition in his mind than thinking of a reply, took it upon himself—inasmuch as a pause, just here, would be exceedingly embarrassing—to say:

"Captain, you are too kind. We owe you too much already. We would, indeed, put up with many inconveniences before we would think of turning you out of your house for our own accommodation."

"Of course," said Isabella, in tones which implied that she was somewhat indignant that such a thing should for a moment be thought of.

"Oh," replied the Chief, smiling pleasantly, "it would not be turning me out, for I have never yet occupied the house, and what is more, I had no very definite plans on the subject. I had the building put up, because I am occasionally seized with hankerings after the scenes of civilization, which I left years ago. I thought that, whenever these fits should return, I might resort to this place,—perhaps with a friend or two,—and spend a few days,

when I have no doubt satiety would again drive me back to the wild woods. I can assure you, that, if it will serve your purpose in the slightest degree, your remaining here would put me to no manner of inconvenience. Moreover, you will find all the houses in town filled to their utmost capacity by your unfortunate countrymen. A tent, or some miserable shed, would be the only habitation you could hope to secure there at present."

"Taking all things into consideration," said the Padre, — emerging out of what seemed to be a brown study, and yet passing so easily into the discussion that it was evident he had heard all that had been said, — "it seems to me that our friend's generous offer had better be availed of. That is, on the two conditions, that he will agree to rent the house to us, and that he will be our guest whenever he feels an inclination to cheer us with his society."

From subsequent developments, it is quite probable that both the man of war and the man of peace had their ulterior objects — the one in making, the other in accepting, this offer. Nor is it by any means impossible that each knew pretty well what the other's object was, — though neither could have suspected that the other knew. The brother and sister, for their part, must have supposed that the Captain's sympathy with their misfortunes was his only motive in the generous act; that he would have done as much for any one else under like circumstances; and that their uncle's recommendation to abide here, arose from his thinking, after mature reflection, that nothing else could well be done, at least for the present.

"Padre," replied Gatewood, coloring, "even were I sordid enough to accept, from persons who are so unfortunate as to have neither home nor country, pay for what takes nothing out of my own pocket, I should find that the latter part of your proposition transfers the burden of debt entirely upon me."

"Then, Captain," replied the priest, "since these young people have put themselves under my charge during our banishment, I will venture to say, in behalf of our whole party, that we will most gladly accept your offer, and make your house our home, if you will likewise make it yours whenever your duties or your inclinations do not call you elsewhere."

"I shall look in upon you, whenever I can," replied the Captain; "and when I do so, I make no doubt the place will appear to me, as much as any place in the world ever can again appear, like home; for though that was once a magic word with me, it has long since lost its peculiar charms,—and, I am afraid, will never regain them."

All were struck with the speaker's sadness, as he uttered these words; and this being the first time they had noticed any exhibition of the kind on his part, a considerable pause ensued upon the sudden transition.

At length the Señorita—who, probably, had not yet entirely recovered from the shock which her maidenly modesty had, some time back, sustained—suggested a new difficulty, apparently by way of proving that she was not so anxious to abide here as her unlucky "hint" might seem to imply.

"But, uncle," said she, "do you think we would be safe here from the Gachupins?"

"Oh," said Gatewood, anticipating the priest's reply, "I have already provided against that. Intending—as I believe I before remarked—to make this very proposition, as soon as yesterday's fight was over, I sent an order to my lieutenant, to move half our force to a position suitable for guarding the road. I have no doubt the order has already been carried out. So, you may rest assured, Señorita, there can be no further danger."

At this point, therefore, the matter of residence was

definitely settled; and the three fugitives became adopted citizens of Neutralia.

The reader will, no doubt, have noticed that Gatewood's manner, during the breakfast-scene, indicated that he had already rallied in a wonderful, not to say unnatural, degree, from his previous forlorn and abstracted condition. This abrupt transformation was, in great measure, brought about by his having suddenly emerged from a distressing state of uncertainty, and his having resolved, irrevocably, on a definite plan of action. He was already bound by a tie previously hinted at, which, although it was comparatively feeble, he was very loth to sever, from the downright cruelty which the act would involve; and it was the remorse felt by him at the thought of rending this connection, to give place to another, that had played no small part in his previous bewilderment. But, once resolved on this unjust course, which an inexorable fate seemed—so at least he thought—to have marked out for him, he thrust the unlovely subject from his mind with that stern force of habit, which one, with such abnormal surroundings as his, almost inevitably acquires.

Henceforth, he was to lead a sort of double life, so to speak: was to have one style of manners for the camp—much the same old style that we have already seen—and another for this cottage by the lake. Nor was it at all difficult for him to play these two parts, widely diverse though they may seem. In the one, he but continued what he had been acting for years, with the wilds for a stage; in the other, he but went back to the time when he was the cynosure of lovely eyes, amid drawing-room splendors. And the latter came to him so naturally now, that, of the two, it seemed the least like acting.

There had once been a chord in his heart, which gave forth sweet music. He long had deemed the chord shattered—

the music stilled forever. Now, he found that the one had but slept, because the other had been untuned by a cruel, careless hand. Here, where she was least to be expected, a fair Euterpe had seized upon the harp-like instrument, attuned it anew, and awakened again the olden tones, whose echo even he had long ceased to recall,—for, years ago, his love—or what he had but too fondly deemed such—had settled into hate.

CHAPTER XIV.

To do this deed

Promotion follows. — *Winter's Tale*.

Policy sits above conscience. — *Timon of Athens*.

THE Padre having learned from Gatewood, in their conversation of the preceding day, that Bernardo Gutierrez had reached Natchitoches, resolved to seek him out with the view of conferring about the cause that lay so near their hearts. He, accordingly, set out for that purpose soon after breakfast.

Bernardo and his Reverence met like the friends that they had long been, and as becomes brothers in a common cause. As soon as they had recounted to each other their adventures in escaping from the enemy, the main subject which had brought them together was discussed; the General enlightening the Padre with reference to matters recently put in train for an invasion of Texas. Magee, who was to direct the campaign, had already gone to New Orleans to secure volunteers and solicit means to carry on the war. One part of the arrangement was, that, on his

way, he was to stop at Alexandria, on Red River, and bring to bear all the influence he could command to have Gatewood's men released from confinement,—they having been sent to that point for trial, which had resulted, as we have before said, in their being sentenced to the penitentiary.

This, he hoped, would prove to be one step towards reconciling the outraged lords of the Neutral Ground. Whether or not their co-operation could be then secured, was another question, Bernardo said, and, he feared, a very doubtful one,—he himself having had a conference with their Chief, on the subject, and having found him wholly irreconcilable, although he had brought to bear upon him all the offers and inducements he could think of. Apparently irritated by the General's persistence, he, at last, abruptly closed the interview, with the declaration that nothing on God's earth would induce him to ask his men to serve under Magee; and that he well knew they would never do so without his solicitation.

Colonel Davenport — whose co-operation was alluded to in a previous chapter as probable — had promised, not only to act as quartermaster to the proposed expedition, but also to expend liberally from his own funds, in raising supplies. He had, moreover, pledged himself to carry out a suggestion of his own, approved by Bernardo, — namely, to secure the services of the Cushatta Indians, a friendly tribe, whose village was about fifty miles north of Natchitoches. To be sure, they had been reduced, by incessant wars, to the pitiful number of about twenty braves, but as these were accounted among the most fearless of all the southern tribes, and, as they nursed the bitterest hostility against the Spaniards, their co-operation was considered material, when it was but too evident that, at the very best, only a meagre force could be raised. For, by the latest gazettes from the United States, it appeared that they themselves

were on the eve of being invaded by Great Britain. Of course, comparatively few would be willing to leave their native country, at such a crisis, to take up arms in a foreign cause.

Manchacá, a bold Mexican of Nacogdoches, possessing unbounded energy, with a strong, though uncultivated, mind, and having great influence with his countrymen throughout the province of Texas, was already at work intriguing against the Spanish authorities.

"I shall go myself to Washington, in a few days," said Bernardo, "to sound the government there on the subject. If they will give us no material aid—and I can hardly hope they will—I shall endeavor to secure some sort of pledge, that they will, at least, not interfere with our operations, which, in case they do, must necessarily abort."

"I wish, General," said the Padre, rather abruptly, "you would take my nephew, Juan, with you. I have good reason to think he is hatching some rash plot of private vengeance."

"God knows, he has sufficient reason," replied Bernardo.

"But, General, such acts never advance a cause like ours; though it is consoling to know that tyrants sometimes get their dues in that way."

"What particular scheme do you think Juan is concocting?"

"How he can get at Salcedo, to assassinate him. I believe he thinks of little else, day or night."

"That is sheer madness. He could not accomplish it—and would only lose his own life in the attempt. Tell him, I should like him to accompany me. Indeed, I see not wherein he can render aid here, while, on the other hand, his fine personal appearance, and his fascinating manners—if he chooses to make good use of them—will do much to enlist the sympathies of such as we may meet at the seat

of government. Yes—by all means, Padre, tell him he must go with me—he will be of great service. And if you are willing to accept the charge, I will leave our interests in this quarter in your care until my return. I know they could not be placed in better hands, provided you can see your way clearly to accept the trust. Our cause owes so much already to men of your calling, that I cannot but hope—”

“Have no doubt, General, but that I will give you my most earnest aid. I shrink from nothing that will tend to advance the cause. I desire no rest from labor, mental or bodily, until Texas, at least, is free—if not all Mexico. Use me as you will.”

“Well, then, Father, I must say that, despite the ominous rebuffs we have received from Gatewood, I should like you to try your powers of persuasion upon him. His co-operation is so important—indeed, I may say, vital—to our success, that I am loth to give him up without at least one more effort. Perhaps, in your ecclesiastical capacity, you might —”

“Nay—I am well assured I can do nothing in the matter, with him, or his, as a priest. They are all godless heathens or heretics, I warrant you, and would laugh my efforts to scorn, since they would at once penetrate my object, imperfectly cloaked as, in that case, it would be, by religion. In the course of my late dealings with the Chief, however,—if I be not greatly mistaken,—I observed that in him on which I may venture to hang a hope, if adroitly dealt with and carefully fostered. But it will require time, even assuming the truth of my suspicions. So, you must have patience. I assure you, however, there shall be no delay in initiating my scheme; nor shall any opportunity to forward it be lost. By the time you shall have returned from your contemplated journey, I hope to

have things in train for a favorable issue of my project — or, shall be prepared to pronounce it utterly hopeless.”

With this understanding — based on a mysterious hint which left Bernardo utterly in the dark as to the means to be used — the soldier and the priest separated.

The Padre Clemente Delgado was one of those thousand malcontent priests of whom, and of whose grievances, Bernardo, in his interview with Lieutenant Magee, gave a somewhat minute account. Let it not be imagined, however, that the Father was an ordinary priest, — or, for the matter of that, an ordinary person, in any sense. He was a man of uncommon natural abilities. These had been expanded by a thorough education in the best colleges of Mexico; and had been made infinitely more available by an easy address and insinuating manners acquired by spending several years among the first circles of the capital, which, at that time, reflected all the courtly accomplishments of Madrid.

Not only was he talented and well-bred, but he possessed, likewise, much energy, great tenacity of purpose, and an unbounded ambition, — or, rather, of the last-named attribute, it may perhaps be more correctly said to have possessed *him*.

I am sorry to confirm the suspicions which have probably already been awakened in the mind of the reader by this description, — namely, that his Reverence's patriotism, although not begotten of motives of personal preferment, was nevertheless greatly intensified thereby. He, who, with all his rare endowments, would, if the present state of things continued, be doomed to an humble chasuble, all his days, longed to wield a bishop's staff, or even an archiepiscopal crosier. Nor of the many aspirants thereto, — and it may safely be said, “their name was legion” —

could there, probably, have been found, in all Mexico, one more worthy of the dignity.

This, to be sure, is no great compliment to the priesthood of that country; but, so far as one can judge from such sources of information as are at present accessible, it is quite as flattering a notice as that body deserve, or, indeed, are likely to get from any unprejudiced chronicler.

But unless the patriot cause could be sustained to its final triumph, there was no earthly hope that his Reverence would ever become a high church-dignitary.

With such an ambition, he was, of course, always on the alert for means tending to its gratification. Among these means, he had already reckoned the probabilities of Gatewood becoming attached to Isabella. Indeed, from the moment he had learned, from the Chieftain's own lips, the formidable force at his disposal, he had resolved to avail himself of every advantage which such an attachment would afford to win him to the patriot cause. So common a thing was it for both young and middle-aged men to fall in love with his beautiful niece, that he looked with much certainty to such a termination of this affair, provided only he could so manœuvre as to throw them two or three times into each other's society.

This being the case, it may readily be conceived that he was much pleased at the turn affairs had taken concerning the occupation of the house on the lake. Of course, it did not enter into his calculations that Isabella would reciprocate the feeling. It would be no proper match for her, he well knew. But, then, she might be induced to lead him on, step by step,—as gifted women too often do,—throwing out a lure of hope now and then, with however no intention, on the one side at least, of its ever being realized,—until, at length, when the main goal should be gained, and there should be no longer any need of deception, the mask she

had won and the heart she had won could be, alike, thrown aside.

It was, in short, to be the old tale over again, of love, coquetry, and politics; and had the holy man, when he prayed for the success of his scheme, prayed, also, that it might not finally prove calamitous to the parties involved, he would, probably, have made better work, in the end,—in the sight of both God and man.

Gatewood was not a man to postpone long what he had once fully resolved on. He very naturally judged that one occupying his anomalous relation to the world, and to society, could nurse no reasonable hope of ever winning, by ordinary means alone,—such as proofs of steadfast devotion, and the setting off and display of personal comeliness and accomplishments,—the fair hand he aspired to. At least, he had no notion of trusting to such means, alone, to effect an object so vital to his future happiness as he had found this object to be. He was, however, as well aware as any, that, often, where unselfish love cannot be returned in kind, ambition and interests, adroitly wrought upon by a suitor, become powerful auxiliaries in winning the hand—the heart (ah, hazardous experiment that makes so many wrecks!) to be won afterwards, by that closer communion which wedlock affords.

Scarcely, therefore, had the Padre left for Natchitoches, before Gatewood set himself about ascertaining the most salient points in the character of the young lady, and—though rather incidentally—in that of her brother, with the view of subserving what was to be henceforth the end and aim of his hitherto all but aimless life. These assailable points, being duly reconnoitred, he would bring to bear upon them all he possessed of love's enginery and fixtures, or he would capture the fortress of her heart by slow ap-

proaches, by storm, or, if all these should fail him, even by the forlorn hope itself—whatever that might prove to be, in this particular case.

He had already abundant reason to suspect that ambition was the Padre's ruling passion. He now ascertained, beyond all doubt, in the conversation which he held with the brother and sister, on the all-engrossing subject of the revolution in Mexico, that vengeance for the murder of his friends and relatives held absolute sway in the former's heart,—while in the case of the sister, pure love of her country, and a desire to accomplish its independence, occupied her bosom to the exclusion of almost everything else.

During the brief time that he was eliciting this information, Gatewood betrayed much interest in the fate of Mexico, and still more in that of Texas, the Señorita's native province; and it soon became evident that his sympathies were fairly enlisted. Fearing, however, that the next step would be to solicit his substantial aid, and not feeling that the proper time had arrived in his affairs for the profitable discussion of that particular branch of the subject, he took himself off rather abruptly,—promising, however, at their earnest invitation, to visit them before many days.

“Between the ambition of the priest, the fierce passions of the brother, and the Señorita's patriotism,”—such were the meditations of the Captain as he rode back to camp,—“my chances are not so very desperate. I believe that woman will do anything to see her native province free: she is clearly an enthusiast on the subject. Well, if she will but smile on my suit, Texas *shall* be free, or it shall be no fault of mine.

“The Padre, too, shall have his crozier, and Juan his fill of blood. Her hand is my price, and for that I would

sell myself to the very Devil. But then, there is another question, Will *she* sell to the Devil? I know myself unworthy of her, yet would I move earth and hell to win her. The other place, I can never hope to move—nor can the like of me.”

Such were the speculations that occupied the Captain, as he approached Camp Wildwood. Indeed, during his whole lonely ride through the forest, on that eventful morning, his new acquaintances formed the staple of his thoughts.

CHAPTER XV.

This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever
Ran on the green sward; nothing she does or seems
But smacks of something greater than herself,
Too noble for this place. *Winter's Tale.*

By 'r lady, sir, and some dogs will catch well.—*Twelfth Night.*

“OH, what a beautiful morning!” exclaimed Filly, as she roused from her slumbers, in the tent appropriated to her special use, and peered out through a loophole. “I’m so glad! ‘Happy the bride the sun shines on.’ I must gather my flowers before Señor returns. They said he would be back by noon.

“Suppose he had been killed in that horrid fight! Oh, what should I have done? I should have been praying, now, to die too, instead of being so happy. Why should there be any bloodshed on the earth? Why can’t men live at peace with each other? How I do wish Señor would change his wild ways, and live a quiet life. Ah me! I can only hope and trust the time may soon come when he *will*.”

The girl soon made her toilet, and hastened to dispatch the breakfast prepared and spread for her by the wife of one of the men, who occupied an adjoining tent. She was the only woman who was allowed to remain within the purlieus of the camp,—her main office, while there, being to attend upon the girl.

Alas, poor Filly! that wild camp, and one other far wilder even than that, made up nearly all she had ever yet seen of the wide, wide world.

The girl was soon on her way to the wood, accompanied by Grim, an immense dog, with short, black hair, bearing on his broad face and brawny breast many a scar, which marked him as the veteran of a thousand tooth-and-claw battles with the wild beasts of Neutralia.

This formidable-looking dog carried Filly's basket in his mouth, having volunteered to perform that supererogatory duty,—his regular functions, on such occasions, going no further than simply protecting his young mistress from the various dangers to which so frail a wanderer through such howling wilds must necessarily be, at times, exposed.

Grim was a mystery, and always had been, from the start. His origin was a mystery. He was, in short, a canine foundling. The earliest authentic account of him was, that he turned up, one morning, in the rear of the Captain's tent, without any credentials whatsoever touching his ancestry. Grim was then in the first blush of puppyhood, his eyes not having opened upon this wicked world. But his mouth had opened,—and to some purpose, since it was by its aid that he was enabled to rouse the Captain from his slumbers at an untimely hour.

The latter, on hearing the unwonted din, right under his nose, rushed out, and finding an ugly, and, withal, as mongrel-looking a piece of dog-flesh as is often seen, (the Captain was very particular about the breed of his pups,)

was so incensed that he snatched down a keen cutlass, snatched up the pup by the back of its neck, and was about to stop the ill-timed serenade, by the summary process of slitting the noisy gullet that gave it passage.

At this terrible crisis in Grim's affairs, Filly rushed forth from the tent, like his good angel, to the rescue. With her usual tones, looks, and gestures of eloquence, she insisted on the poor thing's life being spared. The infuriated Captain arrested the deadly weapon midway in its sweep, to consider; and for him to consider what Filly proposed, was, with scarcely an exception, to grant it. He made no exception to the rule on this occasion, but, at the same time, gave her to understand, that the sentence which had just been revoked, should be instantly carried into execution if that foundling's voice should ever be heard again, to his annoyance.

Filly's first care was to take the pup out of the Captain's sight and hearing. She next prevailed on one of the men to fashion, somewhere away off in the wood, a rude kennel of earth and logs. There she kept him, and fed him regularly with her own hands, until he had attained a very great size; when—relying perhaps on his muscle for his vindication—she ventured one day to take him back to the tent.

The Captain had, by this time, forgotten all about the well-nigh tragic occurrence; and so, the girl had to introduce to him her protégé as the poor orphan pup whom she had saved from a bloody execution.

"But," said she, "he has no name yet, Señor: what shall we call him?"

"Well, Filly," replied the Captain, after a little time to think, during which he closely eyed the quadrupedal giant before him, "he is so *very* ugly, suppose we call him *Grim*."

Filly, who invariably deferred to the Captain's taste in

matters of that sort, agreed at once, and it was "Grim" from that day forth.

The Captain, in consideration of the dog's extraordinary size, for his years—or rather, *months*, his first anniversary not having yet come about—as well as his sagacity, his courage, and last, though not least, his remarkably good temper when not foiled in his manifest rights,—all which traits the huge pup soon proved, beyond cavil, that he possessed,—took him into high favor. The height of the Captain's ambition, in the matter of dogs, had been, all along, to find one that could grapple, single-handed, with the largest bears, panthers, wolves, and, in fact, with any animal that frequented the Neutral Ground, including man himself, provided he had only his natural weapons, or, at most, a bludgeon; and when he looked upon Grim, and thought what he was likely to be, when fully developed both in mind and body, he concluded that, if there ever was, or ever would be, a dog that could "fill the bill," Grim was the dog. So, as I said, Grim was taken into favor; and, from that auspicious moment, he had the run of the camp: though, whenever Filly wanted his services, he was, somehow, always in readiness to attend her. He always slept just outside the door of her tent.

Grim developed his efficiency for hunting much earlier than is usual with his race. Indeed, from the very first time he was called on to wage war against the wild animals of Neutralia, he became the favorite of the men over all the other dogs, of whatever breed, age, sex, or condition. These had to be taught,—but *he* seemed to take to the business as though he had a natural genius for it. And he had.

One of Grim's most wonderful traits, was his imperturbable coolness: he seemed never to get excited. Even when lying on the ground, (a most trying position for a dog,

when danger threatens,) any number of strange dogs might approach him, with every appearance of hostile intent, strut about him, growl, fume, splutter, bully, and assume all sorts of menacing attitudes; yet, not only would he scorn to rise from the defenceless posture, but often would not so much as lift his head, and would sometimes crown his contempt for them by closing his eyes, and, for all a bystander could know to the contrary, go to sleep, while the storm was raging around and threatening to break upon him at any moment. But, if it *did* break, woe betide the unlucky dog, or dogs, that had raised it!

Another very remarkable thing about Grim, was, that he never barked. Not only was this the case when about the camp, but even throughout the exciting time of a hunt. This was about the only fault that could be urged against Grim. He had the truest of noses, and would tree, or bring to bay, more wild animals than all the other dogs put together. But, then, the hunters had no way of knowing when, or where, he had treed, or brought to bay; for he never proclaimed it, but just stood there, or lay down, (according as he felt,) and watched, in silence, until some of the other dogs would come up, on his trail, and do the "tonguing"—thus proving himself emphatically a dog of deeds rather than of words. In fact, he seemed to have exhausted his voice on the eventful occasion when the Captain came so near sacrificing him—as a "crying nuisance"—for his own peace' sake.

For two reasons, one might almost suspect Grim of having Quaker blood in his veins: first, on account of his never losing his temper, as already stated; and, secondly, because, when the time came to "pitch in," he invariably made for the throat of his victim.

After a little successful practice with tiger-cats, leopard-cats, and catamounts—each individual one of which can

whip off a whole pack of ordinary dogs—Grim did not hesitate to engage in single combat with panthers, wolves, and even bears, wherever these could be come at without any very great disadvantages to himself. It was a sight to see—that of Grim and a black or brown bear, of the largest size—an *ursa major* of the forest—come together in mortal strife. And such were, in fact, the only occasions on which the dog displayed—and, even then, in the slightest possible degree—the usual signs of canine excitement. Just before rushing in, he could be seen to raise his bristles a little, while a whine or two, barely audible, would escape him, if the bear was an uncommonly large one, as though just a “leetle bit” anxious about the result of the affair. In these desperate combats, he was never known to miss the throat, reaching that vital point almost on the first onset; though, in getting there, he sometimes sustained lacerations of the visage, which, even after they healed, made him look both older and uglier.

Perhaps, after all, the most remarkable of this dog’s traits, was his constant devotion to the girl who had saved his life. Of this merciful act of hers, it is hard to conceive that a dog, even of Grim’s unusual sagacity, could know anything,—for he could not have seen her face at the time, his organs of vision being, then, wax-tight in early puppyhood. To be sure, he may have heard the pleading tones of her voice; and, indeed, that voice had, ever afterwards, a magic influence over him; for, not only would he, on hearing her call, leave all else and hurry to her side, but, even when the men were going on a hunt, and when Grim well knew they were going—their arms in their hands, and all the other dogs leaping and baying about them in the wildest excitement—they could never, by any means they could use, induce him to accompany them, much as he liked the sport, until she would signify

her willingness to dispense, for a while, with his services, by saying, "Go, Grim!" when he was off with a bound.

Grim could not talk,—although, as I before hinted, he went so far in that direction as to disdain to bark.

Such was the sole escort which the girl had, in her frequent strolls through the surrounding woods, or, indeed, cared to have, so far as it regarded security from harm.

There was not any great variety of flowers in those densely timbered haunts, particularly at that late season; but of such as there were, Filly soon gathered her basketful; and of graceful vines and creepers, besides mosses of different kinds, feathery ferns, and autumn-leaves of almost every hue, she procured more than she well knew how to dispose of.

As she walked eagerly on, gathering these, lured from spot to spot by the new beauties which the luxuriant vegetation successively presented, she talked, at times, now to herself, and now to Grim, who kept close to her side, although her short trips from flower to flower, and her sudden starts and stoppings, one would suppose, must have annoyed him no little.

Occasionally she would stay her steps a moment, to listen to some bird that would break into song near her. Then herself would pour forth snatches of some wild ballad which she had heard about Camp Wildwood. The burden of her utterances, however, seemed to be the line she had quoted on first waking in the tent and finding the day so bright and lovely, "Happy the bride the sun shines on." She had improvised a sort of tune, to which she hummed the joyous sentiment during almost every brief trip she made between knolls. Occasionally, she would hum it forth right into Grim's honest but otherwise ill-favored visage, which he often thrust close to her own, as she stooped to her work. But, as he responded only by

staring blankly into her face, never once smiling, or even so much as changing countenance, it was very evident that he either did not at all comprehend the sentiment thus thrown into his teeth, or did not appreciate it, or, like the reader, perhaps, failed as yet to see why so frequent a repetition of it was appropriate to the present occasion.

After quite a long roaming up and down the woods, the girl came to a gurgling rill, just at the point where it was crossed by a bridle-path; and being reminded—as one often is—by the sight of the running water, that she was thirsty,—her attention to this physical want having been hitherto diverted by her pleasing pursuit, and still more pleasing thoughts,—she plucked a few large leaves, fashioned them, with great dexterity, into a cup, and, laying aside her hat, stooped down and quenched her thirst. She then seated herself on a large mossy log, which, lying directly across the little stream, formed a sort of rustic bridge, and set to work, twining wreaths and arranging bouquets out of the diverse material she had gathered.

Among other wreaths she made one out of a rare species of wild clematis, with blossoms as white as snow, and of surpassing delicacy both of shape and fragrance. She seemed, for some reason, to bestow especial care on this; and, when finished, its construction was so deft, and its arrangement so tasteful, that it was really a masterpiece of its kind. She then placed it upon her head, and, drawing forth from her belt a little looking-glass of quaint workmanship, carefully surveyed her floral crown; and, doubtless, also the beaming face of this young Queen of Neutralia.

“Why should brides,” she said aloud, “always wear orange wreaths, as Señor says they do? I never saw an orange wreath, but I am quite sure it cannot possibly look sweeter or purer than my clematis wreath. I do wish he could see it.”

CHAPTER XVI.

I'll send her straight away :

I'll to the wars, she to her single sorrow.

All's Well That Ends Well.

O wilt thou darkling leave me? do not so.

Midsummer Night's Dream.

Rosalind. Not true in love?

Celia. Yes, when he is in ; but I think he is not in.

Ros. You have heard him swear downright he was.

Celia. Was is not is. *As You Like It.*

IT had been well for the girl if the next wish she was destined to make could have been as easily gratified as this one. "Señor" himself, as she had long been accustomed to call Gatewood, stood, at that very moment, but a few paces off, watching her movements. He had, when yet at a distance, caught sight of Grim lying in the path along which he was making his way to the camp, and seeing a flower-basket by the dog's side, supposed Filly was somewhere near, and resolved to surprise her. For this purpose he dismounted, and leaving his horse standing in the path, walked noiselessly forward on tiptoe. Grim having spied his master from afar, and having recognized him at first sight, suffered him—as, indeed, he invariably did any one whom he knew and liked—to approach without himself making the least demonstration of the fact that he was at hand.

"He *does* see it," said Gatewood, now stepping forward, "and thinks it very becoming."

"Oh, Señor! how you frightened me!" she exclaimed, starting up from her seat and clasping her hands over her heart.

By this time he had reached the spot, and after seating

himself on the fallen tree, took her gently by the arm and bade her sit down beside him. It most probably flashed across the girl's mind as strange, that he did not kiss her, as he always had done at junctures kindred to this. If so, however, she was not long in dismissing the thought, at least for the present; and, seeing that he himself did not speak further, she at once took up — perhaps for want of a more appropriate topic of conversation — her recent train of reflection, as near the point at which his sudden obtrusion had broken it off, as her startled and embarrassed condition would admit of.

“You said brides always wore orange wreaths, Señor. Is n't this just as pretty?” she asked, still crowned, and turning her blushing face up to his.

“It's very pretty, Filly,” he replied, kindly enough, but in a rather compassionate tone, which, however, the girl, in her unsuspecting confidence, and the exuberance of her present joy, did not observe.

“And then, too, when I get my splendid jewels on, which you gave me —”

Gatewood, painfully aware how cruel it would be to let her run on longer in this strain of joyous anticipation, only to meet finally with a bitter disappointment, thought it best to give her at once a hint of what was impending.

“But Filly,” he said, with this view, “you will not have need of such things quite as soon as we thought.”

“Why, Señor?” she timidly demanded, looking at him with an expression of countenance which, from having been all joy, was now wofully downcast. “This was the day: I certainly have n't mistaken the day. You said —”

“Yes — you are right about that, Filly, but — but —”

“But what, Señor?” she asked, as he shrank momentarily, as well he might, from telling her the cruel truth.

“I have been obliged to change my plans,” he replied.

"Obliged to change your plans, Señor?"

"Filly, did they tell you of the refugees we rescued yesterday from the Spaniards?"

"Oh, yes—Mr. Davies told me all about it; and I'm so glad you did such a noble deed," exclaimed the girl, for the moment forgetting her own grievance in the glory of her heart's idol.

"And he said, too," she went on, "the lady was as fine as a queen."

"Well—they are now living in the cottage."

"Not living in *our* cottage, Señor?" said she, with a sudden start of surprise.

"Yes, Filly. All the buildings in the town were full of refugees, and they could get no house there to go into; and I could n't suffer them to be exposed to the weather, you know, with all their misfortunes, too,—and a lady among them.

"What else would you have me do?" he demanded, seeing that, instead of replying to his attempted extenuation of his conduct, she remained silent, and covered her face with her hand.

"I'm so sorry," she said at length, repiningly. "I had my heart set on going to the lake to live. It's so beautiful there. I chose that spot for building the house because we could see so far. And you seemed to like it so much, Señor—and said we would be happy there. But now I suppose I shall have to spend all my life in these dreary old woods, where I can see only a few steps before me. I want to go to the lake, where I can see out, for miles. I'm tired of the old woods. I hate them. I just hate them!"

Here the girl burst into tears; and although Gatewood attempted to draw her to him for the purpose of allaying, so far as he might be able, the storm of emotions which he had raised in her impulsive breast, she did what she had

never done before, broke his gentle hold, and, in a tumult of mingled grief and sense of wrong, rushed from his side, and, prostrating herself in the leaves, buried her face in her hands, and gave free vent—child that she was—to her passionate sobs.

But the heaviest blow had not yet descended. To Gatewood, scenes which roused his sensibilities, even in a slight degree, were always painful. He, however, had been unaccustomed to them of late, and against the few which he had witnessed he had been enabled by natural firmness and force of habit to steel himself, at least to all outward seeming. Inasmuch, therefore, as the distress in the present instance had already affected him to the verge of the melting mood,—affected him, too, infinitely more from the consciousness of his having deliberately caused it all,—he resolved that there should be no repetition of such a scene; but that now, since the flood-gates of grief were fairly open, he would go on even to the bitter end, that the gushing fountain might, if possible, be at once drained to the bottom.

The reader shall, in due time I hope, hear from her own lips the previous part of this girl's story—at least what little was known of it. Suffice it to say here, that she came under the Captain's charge when she was supposed to be about ten years of age, though, truth to say, there was no accurate information whatever on the subject of her birth. And this was the reason why she was known only as Filly—a name conferred by Gatewood in mere sport, but retained for the rest of her life. She had no family name at all, nor had she the slightest recollection of her parents, having been separated from them—whoever they were—by one of those terrible strokes of fate which shroud in gloom the prospects of such as they come upon, but which are fortunately of rare occurrence. The Captain had rescued her from a doom worse than death.

The camp had been her home. Her rescuer not only treated her, at all times, with the utmost kindness and consideration, but himself taught her, in the first place, to speak the English language—of which she knew not a word—and afterwards to read and write it with considerable accuracy; a task which, under his peculiar circumstances, must have cost him no little trouble and patience.

The result was, her knowledge of the world was confined almost entirely to such books as he, from time to time, placed at her disposal,—consisting mostly of novels,—and to such peeps behind the curtain of society as he chose to afford her by his conversation. She rarely ever communicated with any one about the camp except the woman whose duty it was to serve her, as before mentioned. This was an honest, simple-hearted soul, who had been selected from among the camp-women for those very qualities; and inasmuch as she herself had had but few opportunities of seeing anything of the great world, she knew little of its ways; and not being at all communicative or gossipy, she kept to herself well-nigh all she did know.

The girl's personal charms, even amid the fearful surroundings from which Gatewood had rescued her, blighting as these usually are to all natural beauty, and hopelessly precluding the possibility of its cultivation, were nevertheless considerable; and so fascinating did she become as she ripened into womanhood, that for the last year he had resolved to make her his wife. Let it be recorded to the credit of this in some respects remarkable man, that, notwithstanding he was away off here in this howling wilderness, where no law ever reached, he had hitherto refrained from availing himself of his position to take advantage of the youth and innocence of this lone girl, and of her ignorance of the world's ways touching virtue, for the purpose of wronging her, and then throwing her aside as a

ruined bauble which purity and worth would henceforth spurn as they passed, should she ever dare show her face within the pale of civilization. His resolution to assume this honorable relation towards the friendless girl, outcast though he was, and surrounded by associates of brutal instincts, who held the fair fame of woman in special contempt, showed at least that he had not altogether forgotten the dictates of honor and his duties to society.

"Filly," he said, as he now walked up to where she was lying with her face towards the earth, and attempted to lift her to a sitting posture, "get up and sit by me on the leaves—I want to talk to you."

She, however, resisted his efforts, and fell back to her position, still weeping as though her heart would break.

"Filly," said he at length, "you must go to town and stay with old Mrs. Davies."

It now became evident that, thus far, much of the girl's demonstration of emotion had been put on with the hope of effecting her purpose by its violence, since she probably thought there was no other way of carrying her long-nursed pet project of living by the lake. For although she had just been accusing her fate for being compelled to abide longer in the woods, she now clung to these wild scenes with an earnestness which it was pitiful to look upon. This infinitely greater grief wholly annihilated the less.

On hearing the Captain's words, she instantly lifted her face from the leaves.

"Oh, no—Señor! don't do that—don't send me away—anything but that"—she cried, falling into his lap where he now sat on the ground, and burying her face in his bosom. "I am sorry I said what I did. I'll never do so again, if you will only let me stay. I'm willing to live here in the woods—anywhere—oh! anywhere in the world, with *you*. Don't send me away!"

It was plain that her grief was no longer put on. The tears that streamed forth now were clearly those of genuine anguish. Gatewood became suddenly aware, ere he had time to think, that his resolution was fast oozing out at his eyes, and at the next breath he felt the big drops—the first for many a long year—course scaldingly down his cheek. The girl, however, did not observe this: her head was still bowed down, and she thought not once of looking into those fierce eyes for such tender witnesses of his relenting. Long ere she looked up from where she rested they were cleared of all moisture, and showed no signs whatever of yielding.

The struggle in Gatewood's breast during this brief time,—to his honor be it recorded,—was such as to well-nigh subvert all the plans and hopes of the new happiness which he had just been cherishing for himself, even up to the very moment when he had descried her in his homeward path. And indeed had he known, at this time, the depth of her devotion for him, it is not impossible that the result of that struggle might have been different. But he thought, and not without some show of reason, that her love arose partly from gratitude, but more from her isolated position, she never having really been acquainted with any of the sterner sex but himself. He judged that, if she went to live in the town, as he had just proposed, she would soon meet with some one far worthier of her than he felt himself to be, and that she would then be but too glad to forget the wild haunts of her childhood and her bandit lover, in the novelty and pleasure which her new situation would afford in the untold raptures of mutual affection.

But although he had now resolved, for the second time during the last half-hour,—and this time inexorably,—to send her off, he thought it more humane to be less sudden with her. He therefore determined to afford her an oppor-

tunity to argue the matter with him for a short time, during which he would give her to understand in a gradual way what she was to expect.

"Yes, Filly — you must go," he said in kindly tones, raising her face gently toward his with both his hands so soon as he felt assured that all signs of his recent emotion had dried from his eyes. You know, you are no longer a child, but have grown to be a woman; and it is not proper for a man and woman to live together unless they are husband and wife."

"Why, Señor — is that all? I'm sure there can be no great harm in that. Who says it's wrong, Señor?"

"The world says so, Filly," he replied, forgetting that the world's opinion — that great bugbear which dictates more or less to us all, though unfortunately not always so correctly as in this instance — could have but few terrors for this unsophisticated child of nature.

"The world, indeed! Why should *I* care for what the world says, Señor?"

"But you may care some day, Filly, — when you come to live in it."

"Do you, then, expect to take me to live in the world some day?"

"I — I may. You know, any one who leads the life I do, can't always tell exactly what he's going to do."

"But, Señor, you said, if I was your wife, the world would n't think it wrong that we should live together — even here in the woods, I suppose."

"Yes."

"Then what's the use of separating? I'm willing to live anywhere, or anyhow, so you don't send me away, or leave me. I'll take back all I said before: I don't want to go to the lake: if you will only let me stay here, I shall be happy."

"Filly, I suppose I may as well tell you, once for all, everything about my reasons for sending you into town. I know you never repeat what I tell you, and you must n't repeat this, for it is a great secret. I expect to go on an expedition and take all my men with me."

"When, Señor?" asked the girl, greatly startled at the tidings,—as might have been seen in the sudden blanching of her cheek, and heard in the gasping, half whispered tones in which she spoke those two little words.

"That, I can't tell precisely—before a very great while, though."

Nothing was said for some time, during which the girl seemed to be absorbed in dejected reverie.

"How long will you be gone, Señor?" she asked at length.

"Oh—maybe a long while."

"Then, Señor, that is the very reason you ought to let me stay with you while you are here," said she; and the thought of his going away, most probably into danger, caused her tears to flow afresh. But she was now too deeply interested in arguing and in imagining she had yet some hope of carrying her point, to wipe them away. So they welled up from her heart and were allowed to trickle unheeded, one after another, down her now flushed cheeks. "For all I know you may be going into war, and I may never see you again."

"But, Filly," he replied, "I shall have to be away from camp a great deal, sometimes for days together, getting things ready for the expedition."

"Well, if you will only let me stay, I can see you whenever you *are* there. But if I go to town, I shall *never* see you." How speedily may circumstances reverse feelings we have nursed for years. Heretofore the Chief had most jealously kept the girl, whose heart (and soul too) he had

won, away from the town, lest she should there meet with some one who might lure her from him. But *now* he hoped with all his heart not only that she would be willing to go thither, but that some worthy youth would soon — he cared not how soon — win her to stay.

“Why, it will not be safe for you in camp, while I’m away so long at a time.”

“Grim will take care of me,” said she, putting her arm around the great neck of the dog, who had long before come and lain down near her. “Won’t you, Grim?”

To this Grim did not respond with his voice, as indeed he never did, — but no one could have doubted, from the affectionate look which he bestowed upon the girl as he raised his claw-scarred visage, that, if need were, he would defend her to the death.

“No, Filly — you must give it up,” said Gatewood, this time, with more decision in his tone, — finding probably that she was growing too hopeful, and to say the truth, was, at times, getting the better of him in the debate. “Davies will take you to town in the morning. You have no idea how many more charms the town will have for you than the woods. The big houses will cause you to forget our poor tents; the gardens and flowers will make you wonder how you ever could have admired these thickets where you can see little or nothing; and” — here he twined his arm around her slender waist — “when you go into society and get acquainted with the fine-looking men you will meet there, you’ll say to yourself, ‘Why, how much more agreeable they are than Señor: if I had only seen them first, I —’”

“Oh, how can you say that?” she exclaimed, burying her face in her hands. “That is cruel — too cruel!”

This outburst was so unexpected to him and so unquestionably genuine, that Gatewood was alarmed at the effect

of his words, and hastened to atone for them so far as was in his power — and, alas! in the end, too far for her own good.

“You must n’t think me in earnest always, Filly. I only meant that when you once get settled in the town, you ’ll find everything much better than out here. I know you ’ll not forget Señor. I was only joking about that, sweet. Look up, and let me see you — and kiss you too. There, now! I know you ’ll be ready to go, in the morning, like a good girl. And then you can muse just as much as you please, and dream, too, if you like, of my coming back from our expedition and making you happy.”

These deceptive words, which he endeavored to think himself justified in uttering with the view of accomplishing quietly, rather than by force, that which had become with him a foregone conclusion, produced the effect intended. The poor girl’s face, which grief had so overcast, cleared at once — the matter had ended on terms so much less hard than she had, a few moments ago, expected.

Rising, he assisted her from the ground.

“Come, now,” he said, “you shall ride my horse to camp.”

Saying which, he led her to where the animal was standing in the bridle-path, and throwing the right stirrup over, lifted her to the saddle, and giving her the rein, walked on, while she followed — Grim, with the basket of flowers, bringing up the rear.

“Señor, you will let me take Grim with me?” said she, when they had nearly reached the camp — glancing back at her most humble obedient servant.

“What folly, child? Why, Grim is as indispensable in camp as — as I am. You certainly would n’t wish to spoil all our splendid hunts just for the sake of having the dog chained in a little back-yard that you might look at him

through the window. Even the slight gratification this would afford you would be destroyed; for you would be always thinking how cruel it was to the dog to keep him cramped up in that way. Why, I believe it would kill Grim outright. And then it would never do for him to run loose in the streets,—he would frighten everybody to death. Moreover, I'm certain old Mrs. Davies would n't endure him in the house. So, you see, while the dog is all in all to us in the woods, he could be of no use whatever in town. And then, as for his being at all ornamental—well, you know, Filly, as well as I do, that Grim was never accused of *that*, even in his more youthful days; and the unsightly marks which the bears and cats have set on his countenance since, have done more to excuse his notorious ugliness than to improve his appearance."

"Señor," said the girl, not altogether liking these free comments on the personal appearance of her faithful friend and constant attendant,—in his hearing, too; for Filly had an idea that Grim could about half comprehend any ordinary conversation,—“Señor, I don't think Grim so very ugly."

"You don't think Grim very ugly?" exclaimed the Captain, stopping suddenly and looking back, on hearing this preposterous opinion, as he most assuredly thought it.

"No—I do not," persisted the girl, in a firm and somewhat indignant tone.

"Perhaps you don't think him *at all* ugly?"

"I can't say I do."

"Well, maybe you think him pretty?"

"Sometimes."

"Do you ever think him beautiful, Filly?"

"Well—not—often," replied Filly, though with such evident reluctance, that the Captain, after a glance at the dog—who seemed, each time that he looked at him, much

uglier even than he expected—was fain to laugh aloud. The girl, however, not only did not join in his merriment at her favorite's expense, but looked a little piqued, and as though by way of offset to the derogatory remarks, said, as she gazed back compassionately at him:

“Don't believe what Señor says about you, Grim. Come along, you *good* old fellow!”

“‘Good,’ I grant you,” said the Captain, starting on again; “but not in the least beautiful.

“Sometimes, Filly,” he resumed after a short silence, “when we see a very pretty person and don't wish to attach too much importance to mere comeliness, which we know to be a very perishable thing, we say, ‘Beauty is only skin-deep.’ Now, as I don't wish Grim's misfortune to depreciate him in our estimation, I will modify the saying—to his advantage, as I think—and put it, ‘Ugliness is only skin-deep.’”

CHAPTER XVII.

They were not born for bondage. — *Cymbeline*.

Nothing can or shall control my soul

Till I am even with him. — *Othello*.

Let him be

Until a time may serve. — *Winter's Tale*.

THE Delgados, as I have already said, were from San Antonio de Bexar, which their ancestors had assisted in founding nearly a hundred years before. And here a brief sketch of the founding of that city—which has always been the leading one in Texas until Galveston recently became a formidable rival in growth and prosperity—may

prove not uninteresting to the reader, because it was the home of the family whose adventures are related in this story; but more especially because it is to be made, in due time, the theatre of some of the most prominent historical events which we shall attempt to depict.

From the year 1691, when the first regular Spanish settlements were made in Texas in the guise of Missions for the conversion of the wild Indians to Christianity, till 1730, Texas could scarcely be said to have made, on the whole, any progress whatever in the ways of civilization. Each of those Missions—of which there were some half-dozen in all, situated at different points in the province,—was conducted and controlled by a few Franciscan friars, who, during their peculiar operations among the savages, were protected by a small garrison of Spanish soldiers. The friars, however, jealous, it would seem, of the military's power and influence,—which they knew would be ultimately much increased if they were allowed to marry and have families in the regular way,—succeeded in virtually abolishing marriage among them; which “sacrament,” indeed, had always, even before this priestly interdiction, been exceedingly difficult to bring about, owing to the necessity of every officer and soldier getting the King's assent as a condition preliminary to taking a wife unto himself. The almost necessary result, among a soldiery already proverbially deficient in bridling their baser passions, was a promiscuous intercourse with the Indian women in and about the Missions.

It was mainly owing to the degraded character of the population springing from this licentiousness, that Texas, as above stated, made no progress for forty years. On this lamentable state of things being made known to the King of Spain, he signified his wish that a large number of the families residing in the Canary Islands, who were among

his best subjects, should migrate to this province, as richly favored by nature as it had been hitherto cursed by the innate viciousness and the religious fanaticism which were so fatally blended in the persons of the first settlers.

Although liberal inducements were offered, with the view of effecting the migration contemplated by his Majesty, comparatively few could be prevailed upon to cast their lot in this distant though fertile wilderness. In the year 1730, however, ten or fifteen families of the Islanders reached Texas. These emigrants, who were expected to initiate a more auspicious career for the hitherto unfortunate province, went to work on the head-waters of a beautiful river and founded the city of San Antonio—or, as it was called at first, San Fernando.

These Islanders were noted not only for their regular habits,—on which his Majesty no doubt reckoned largely as an element of success in the enterprise he had originated,—but also for the respect in which they held the weaker sex, their chivalry towards all their fellow-beings, and their religious fervor.

Upon the head of each of these families the King conferred the title of Hidalgo,—a dignity which invested the recipient with certain privileges and immunities. He could, for example, plead his title in bar of any suit brought by the common citizen for the restitution of property, even though illegally seized, or for the punishment of outrages committed against personal rights, or liberty, or even life itself. These, one may well suppose, were dangerous prerogatives; and it is difficult to conceive why they should have been conferred at all, except indeed as a blow aimed directly at the manifest rights of the people. It is to the everlasting credit of those so clothed, that they seldom abused their powers.

Among the families in San Antonio who, at the time we

commemorate, regarded themselves as the nobles of the country, and were so regarded by others,—in so far at least as nobility was by that time recognized at all,—and who, at any rate, formed, practically, a much privileged class, was that of the Delgados, their ancestors having been among those who had migrated from the Canary Islands in response to the King's desire.

Colonel Delgado, the father of Isabella and Juan, and brother of the Padre, was a native of San Antonio. He was a man of wealth and intelligence, had received a superior education, and being gifted with a fine person and fascinating manners, was not only a leader in society, but his influence was co-extensive with his native province. Many of his relatives having removed from Texas, in the by-gone time, to the various other provinces, and some to the capital, the name had become pretty well known throughout Mexico.

Colonel Delgado had early imbibed the spirit of our Revolution, and was fain to imitate our example; but the thinly settled frontier where he lived was not a point at which he could hope to initiate such a struggle with any prospect of success. He was therefore obliged to bide his time. Meanwhile, however, he was by no means idle. Not only did he avail himself of every safe opportunity to inculcate by conversation the immortal principles of liberty, but he went to great expense in educating his children with a constant eye to the advancement of those principles.

Isabella and Juan, after several years spent in the famous schools of Queretaro—the priests who conducted the institutions there, being widely known for their liberal political views—were sent to the United States to spend the last year of their education, to the end that the germ of freedom, so auspiciously awakened within them at home, not only should lose nothing in its growth, but should

absorb from that genial soil such nutriment as might expand it into a sturdy plant which could defy the storms of despotism. Here, they not only learned the English language, but met and conversed daily with Americans of the best society, read their history, and studied their institutions. They returned to their native land just on the eve of that brief military campaign, which, under the direction of the earnest though inexperienced Cura Hidalgo, opened, as we have seen, near the centre of the country with such unprecedented success, and closed so disastrously on the circumference, in the province contiguous to Texas.

During this bloody campaign Colonel Delgado and his son did good service in the cause of the patriots,—the former as a prominent officer, the latter as ensign in a company from his native town. The father escaped, for a short season, the fearful fate of his illustrious leaders, so many of whom were inhumanly executed at Chihuahua in short instalments; namely, on the first of May, 1811, one major-general and one brigadier; on the 11th of the same month, one major-general and one colonel; on the 6th of June, one major-general and one colonel; on the 26th of the same month, the generalissimo, the captain-general and governor of Monterey, and one lieutenant-general; on the 27th of the same month, an influential lawyer, an army intendant, and a brigadier; and finally, on the 27th of July, the Curate Hidalgo himself—the Chief of the rebellion.

Colonel Delgado was, however, soon afterwards captured at San Antonio and very summarily disposed of, his head being cut off, stuck on a pole, and exposed in the most public part of the town. Young Juan had also been taken, and he and his mother were both forced by the inhuman Salcedo, the commandant of the north-eastern provinces, to be present at the execution, and by order of the monster, the blood which streamed from the neck of his brave

victim, was sprinkled over the person of his swooning wife.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that the thoughts of the youth — who managed to make his escape before his turn came to die — dwelt ever afterwards on this diabolical scene? Is it any wonder that schemes of vengeance were nursed in his heart to the very verge of frenzy? Or is it any wonder that his spirited sister, so far from allowing such deeds to beget in her breast an apathy to oppression, should have been converted by them into an enthusiast in the cause of her country's independence?

The truth is, that, during the fierce conflicts of this revolution, — which up to the time of Hidalgo's capture occupied only about six months, — there were many acts of cruelty perpetrated on both sides. There was, however, this extenuating, though by no means justifying, excuse to be urged by the patriots, which could not be pleaded by their more intelligent enemies, namely, that their army was made up of the most ignorant of the notoriously ignorant masses of Mexico. These finding themselves suddenly free after such a long and terrible oppression — their ancestors too having suffered for three hundred years before them — it was quite impossible for their leaders to control them when the favorable moment for vengeance arrived. Now, inasmuch as the debasing ignorance in which they had been purposely kept by the Spaniards, was really the cause of these barbarities, the tyrannical masters were themselves, in a great measure, responsible for the atrocities committed.

“Juan,” said the Padre, — as the three took their seats at the breakfast-table the morning after the uncle had returned from Natchitoches, — “of course you will go with the General to Washington?”

On the previous evening, while detailing his conversation with Bernardo, the priest had informed his nephew of the General's request, that he would accompany him on his contemplated journey. At that time however he made no reply; hence the renewal of the proposition in the morning.

"I had laid other plans," replied Juan curtly.

"Other plans!" echoed his Reverence. "What are they?"

The information which the priest had—that his nephew intended returning to San Antonio to assassinate Salcedo—was not positive, though sufficient to justify the strongest suspicions. Moreover, young Delgado was wholly ignorant that his uncle had any idea of such a plot being in existence. Hence the latter's affectation of ignorance, as implied in the foregoing interrogatory. He did not wish Juan to think—just yet, at least—that he had already heard such a rumor.

"Well," replied the young man,—though not until a good while after the question had been propounded,—“perhaps it don't matter, uncle, what they were. Let them go for the present; the time for them will yet come. As Bernardo is our acknowledged leader while here, if he thinks I can serve the cause better by going to Washington with him than in any other way, why, I suppose I ought to go.”

"Certainly you ought," said the Padre eagerly. "I knew, that, after you had the whole night to think over the proposition, you could not but act reasonably in the matter. And, Juan, you ought not to tarry long. The General starts very soon,—probably to-morrow or next day,—and you know a journey like that will require some preparation after you get to town."

"Oh," replied the nephew, "you need n't fear much dallying on my part: I have already told Miguel to saddle

my horse, and I shall start as soon as I have swallowed my breakfast."

So tenacious of his purposes had Juan always proved himself, and so yielding did he now seem, that his uncle thought, at once, he must have been misinformed with regard to the bloody machinations of his nephew, and was, of course, rejoiced to find him, for once, so reasonable.

The priest, himself probably possessed of as much tenacity as his nephew, had resolved to use all the means he could think of to deter him from a scheme which he was confident would only eventuate in the sacrifice of his own life with no good result to the cause; and, as the very last resort, he had determined to bring to bear upon him—after extorting a confession of guilt in the matter of the contemplated assassination—those spiritual terrors which appertain peculiarly to the priestly office, by virtue of which, according to the creed of his Church, he could call down the anathemas of heaven.

The true secret of young Delgado's yielding so readily is to be found in the fact that he had overheard one of the Spanish officers who captured the party say, incidentally,—though in such a connection as to leave on his mind no doubt of its truth,—that the monster whose blood he so fiercely sought had been called by the Viceroy temporarily to the capital. This of course rendered it, for the time, impossible for the youth to reach him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It is a rupture that you may easily heal. — *Measure for Measure.*

No, holy father, throw away that thought. — *Measure for Measure.*

I shall beseech your highness,
In such a business give me leave to use
The help of mine own eyes. — *All's Well That Ends Well.*

My integrity ne'er knew the crafts
That you do charge me with. — *All's Well That Ends Well.*

NO sooner had Juan ridden away, than the Padre— impatient to put into operation his project for winning over the Chief of the Neutral Ground through the influence which he doubted not his niece would be able to wield over him,—broached the subject to her at once. Truth to say, it is not at all improbable that his reason for urging his nephew to a speedy departure was attributable more to his impatience to carry out this plan than to any well-grounded fear that he would be too late.

“Isabella,” he began, as they sat under the trees, “did you hold any conversation with Captain Gatewood about the republican cause?”

“Of course I did, uncle. You know I never let any such opportunity escape me,” she replied, with a slight laugh.

“Did he seem interested in the subject?”

“Oh, yes—he appeared to sympathize very warmly with us.”

“Well, did you ask him to do more than sympathize?”

“No—I thought we were already under too many obligations to him to begin begging so soon for additional favors, particularly as he promised to visit us again before long.”

"But the favors we have to ask now," replied the priest, "are not of a personal character: they are for our country. That, you know, is very different. I suppose, though, you were right in not hurrying matters too much. He should have time to digest what we have told him. But when he comes again, I hope, Isabella, you will—"

"Why put it upon me to do this, uncle?" interrupted the Señorita. "With all respect, I must say I should think *you* the more proper person to influence any one in political discussion."

"So far as regards the politics of the matter," replied the priest, "you are probably right in your opinion; but *sentiment*, you know, goes a great way with some persons."

"Very true," said Isabella; "but I should judge that in a man of Captain Gatewood's cast of mind, sentiment, though it might have its weight, would be at all times subservient to reason."

"Not at *all* times: there is just where you are mistaken. In this case sentiment predominates," said the Padre; then added, leaning over towards her and speaking in a very low tone, as though afraid the very trees might hear, since it was quite evident there was no human being within ear-shot, "And let me tell you, you have great influence over him."

"Great influence over Captain Gatewood?" exclaimed Isabella, astonished not more by the assertion than by the confidential tone in which it was communicated. "Why, uncle, I cannot think I have any influence whatever over him, except so far as my misfortunes may excite his compassion and his desire to relieve them; and I have no doubt it would be the same with regard to any other woman in my situation. If I had rescued him from a set of merciless butchers, as he has rescued us, why, then indeed, I might naturally expect to hold over him such

influence as gratitude would beget — but certainly nothing more. Having done nothing of the kind, however, I am utterly at a loss to understand your meaning. Let me say, I think that, for once, uncle, you have got things strangely confused. Instead of recognizing our immense indebtedness to the brave Captain, one might suppose you thought *him* the debtor.”

“Isabella,” said the priest, “can it be possible that you, who have been so accustomed to such matters and so observant of them, should not yet have perceived that he is deeply in love with you?”

“Why, uncle!” she exclaimed, coloring. “Indeed, you were never so mistaken in your life. Nor do I wonder at it. Not only are you wholly excluded by your vows from the indulgence of the tender passion yourself, but your calling must afford you very few facilities for noting its workings in others. So, I suppose you are excusable for such gross blunders when you step out of your legitimate sphere. But, if you will pardon me, I hardly think the stepping out excusable. Uncle, do let me dare once advise you to refrain in future.”

“It is you who have made the mistake, Isabella,” calmly replied the priest, “and a very common mistake it is. It consists in supposing that my office is incompatible with a thorough knowledge of the passion in question. The truth is, there is not in the whole world a situation more favorable than the priestly function to the study, not only of love, but of all the passions which bless and curse our kind. Very rarely indeed have I formed a wrong opinion on such a subject; and I am absolutely certain that my judgment in the present particular is correct.”

“I never dreamed of such a thing,” said the Señorita in all sincerity, though now beginning to think there might

be something in it. Nor was it with less sincerity that she added, after a pause, "No, indeed — my heart was too full of gratitude to him to think of anything else. I thought of his bravery — his nobleness — but not once of his love."

"Well, Isabella," said his Reverence, "I have only to say, it is high time that you *should* think of it, and of the almost unbounded influence it will give you over him for the furtherance of our cause."

"Uncle, you certainly do not mean —"

Here the Señorita stopped; and her uncle well knew that the sentence, unfinished as it was, was but a delicate mode of inquiring what he really did mean.

"I mean," he replied emphatically, "that Captain Gatewood has under his complete control a body of men who could sweep Texas from one end to the other, and expel every villain of a Gachupin beyond the Rio Grande."

Here it is but proper to explain that the Padre probably stretched a little his belief in the prowess of the Neutrals, the better to impress upon his niece the importance of securing their services.

"I did n't know so much as that about it," replied the lady. "I was aware, though, that he commanded a very brave and very formidable band. But even had I known what you state — nay, had I known that the whole force of the United States was at his beck, and that on a word from him they would rush forth and drive every enemy of our freedom into the western ocean — even that could not induce or enable me to do an impossibility."

"You mean you could not love him?"

"That is exactly what I mean."

"But, Isabella, I don't ask you to do that."

"What, then, in heaven's name, am I to infer from your remarks?" demanded the Señorita, coloring, to think that she had probably made a gross blunder on so delicate a subject.

"I mean merely," replied her uncle, "that the Chief's feelings toward you must be availed of to secure his cooperation in the coming campaign. I am convinced that without him we shall never succeed in an expedition from these borders. We expected, as you know, to get a great many volunteers from the United States. But that power, as we learn from the latest files, is in constant expectation of an invasion by England; and as long as such danger threatens them at home, we cannot hope for any large number of men from that quarter.

"That Gatewood cannot be induced by ordinary means to aid us has been rendered certain, or you may be sure I should not have approached you with a proposition which I know must be more or less revolting to your better feelings. Since Americans are to form our invading army, of course they will have to be commanded by one of their own countrymen. And now comes the difficulty: the officer selected for this purpose—the only one whose services we were able to secure, but who, I doubt not, is the best qualified of them all—not long ago had a collision with a party of Gatewood's men, which resulted in the capture of a number of them. The officer, Colonel Magee, thinking—whether justly or not I am unable to say—that they had been engaged in some unlawful acts, caused them to be tied up and flogged. As soon as Gatewood heard of this transaction he swore eternal hostility to that officer."

"What else could have been expected?" said the Señora, becoming interested in the story. "I am sure Captain Gatewood's spirit in thus resenting such an insult to his men is much to be admired."

"Since that occurrence," the Padre went on without heeding her remark, "every plan of conciliation has been tried on him in vain. The justice of our cause has been

explained to him; he has been plied with promises of reward to himself and his men in the shape of money, lands, and office, but he has invariably repelled them with anger or contempt. Colonel Magee has lately addressed himself to the task of atoning in some measure for his offence, by using his influence in effecting the release of the men on whom he inflicted so degrading a punishment, and who are now in the custody of the United States authorities, awaiting their transportation to the penitentiary — having already been sentenced. Should they be freed by Magee's instrumentality, it is thought Gatewood's active hostility may be neutralized. But that is the extent of our expectations: he will not, even then, assist us: he will only remain, at best, an idle spectator of our operations."

"Now, uncle," said the Señorita as soon as the Padre had paused, "I have purposely refrained from interrupting you, hoping you would make your object clear. Have you finished?"

"Yes — at least I thought so — that is, I supposed you understood me."

"Not at all, uncle; and if you will but deign to be a little more explicit, you shall have my thanks. It was but a moment ago that you said I misinterpreted your meaning, and I have no idea of so soon subjecting myself to the same charge. I own that my failure to comprehend you may be due to dulness; but to show you that it is not owing to want of attention, I recollect distinctly your last words bearing on the subject of my supposed influence with the Captain, and what you would have me do in the matter. I can quote your exact words. (All you have spoken since, though interesting enough as matter of fact, does not, so far as I can see, affect me personally; nor does it indicate what you wish my course to be.) You said then that his feelings towards me must be availed of

to secure his co-operation. Now, pray tell me precisely the meaning of that — of course, taking into consideration what I told you before — that to love him was impossible.”

Up to this point in the colloquy, the Padre had voluntarily stood on his usual familiar level with the Señorita: he had purposely refrained from elevating himself upon any such vantage-ground as age, guardianship, and his sacred calling gave him over her. It may have been that he hoped and preferred to convince her while they stood on this equal footing. It is more probable, however, when we consider the character of the man, that those advantages had been kept in the background for much the same reason that a skilful general reserves his best forces not only during the skirmishing, but until the crisis has arrived, — when he brings them up in full force, often to his opponent's discomfiture. Moreover, his Reverence was a little nettled that she should avail herself of his condescension thus to display her wilfulness, — as he chose to think it, — and a certain air of what he took to be downright effrontery.

“Isabella,” he now began, on this new ground, — transformed almost instantly from the free and easy companion that he had assumed to be, into the old man, the priest, and the protector that he was of right, — “your affectation of ignorance and innocence compels me to tell you what you are doubtless not aware of — that I am acquainted with your past career as a belle. That, although I have not seen you, I have heard of you through others, — leading your captives in triumphal procession for days, weeks, or months, according to the estimated value of the conquest, then throwing them lightly aside, humbled, blighted, and still in chains. Need I remind you how artfully you have, a hundred times, thrown out the lure of a look, a smile, or a word, to the unsuspecting youth, who else had never come within the sphere of your attraction? Of the fatal whirl-

pool which you kept ever in motion about you, invisible to your blinded victims, and felt by them only when too late? Need I recall the especial delight you have so often taken in seducing young men from the side of the faithful maidens to whom they were plighted, and to whom, but for you, they would have been happily wedded? And yet with all this human ruin about you, you could smile, and feast, and dance, and revel—ay, and pray to your God—no, not to *your* god, for that was heartless Fashion, but to the one God in heaven—as though, instead of pangs, you had been the dispenser of blessings in the circles where you moved. So, you schemed, and plotted, and played the hypocrite—and for what? Merely to gratify your personal vanity—and this, but for a moment; for such conduct could only make for you, among those whose good opinion alone is worth securing—the true and virtuous—to say the least, a very questionable reputation. Such, then, was the stake for which you were so eager to play a game at once cruel to others and dangerous to yourself. Yet now, when the glorious ambition presents of serving your country by practising, for a little season, the same course toward a single individual, you can plead, in excuse, that it would shock your moral sensibilities and all your nice womanly feelings! To be sure, you did not say this in so many words, but it is plain enough you could have had no other meaning.”

His Reverence having said his say, paused for an answer. It was, however, very evident that he had mistaken the character of the girl with whom he was dealing. Instead of showing signs of penitence, as he quite expected she would on hearing this sharp rebuke and this formidable exposition—bursting into tears, and then falling impulsively at his feet, craving his forgiveness in his spiritual as well as his social capacity—she did nothing of the sort;

but, after listening to him throughout, apparently unmoved either by the severity of his remarks or the bitter tone in which they were expressed, she calmly said:

“Uncle, while I confess, to my shame, that too much of what you have said is true in spirit, I must explain wherein you have been entirely too hard on your niece. Now, I don’t mean to doubt for a moment that you have heard all this; but I am very sorry you could bring yourself to believe such a story of me. My conduct in society has been most grossly misrepresented to you—from what motive I scorn to conjecture, as I scorn to ask, and indeed care not to know, the source whence the damaging gossip came. I have never gone further than to array, in all the attractiveness which I could summon, such charms as nature gave me, and to display them before those I met, perhaps without due regard to consequences. But as to that aggressive policy of deliberate conquest with which you charge me, I have never been guilty of it—never. I confess that I have set my tongue to honeyed phrases, my lips have coined their sweetest smile, my eyes have looked their sweetest looks, hoping—cruelly if you choose—that victims would fall at my feet, and knowing full well the pangs that I caused the while; but I uttered no false words—did no false acts in all my career—and never once have I, as you have accused me, attempted to lure a lover from his plight; *that*, I would scorn to do.

“Such is a truthful picture of my career in the gay cities of Mexico—the capital included—where so much attention was lavished on me by those who petted, and as I freely own, spoiled me too. I do not ask or expect you to pardon even these violations of sincerity, trivial though they are in comparison with those you have held me guilty of: I know they were wrong. Yet is it due not only to myself but to you, to say that, if you knew what caused all

this—if you could read the secret which rankled in my bosom and drove me to such a course, with the hope of temporary relief, though I must say the relief did not come—you could not find it in your heart to heap on me reproaches which otherwise I might well deserve.”

“Why, Isabella,” said the Padre, whose expression, from being stern, had suddenly become deeply touched with compassion—for he really loved his niece—“I never heard a hint of anything of the kind: I always thought you a gay and heartless flirt.”

“And so did others,” was the reply; “nor do I wonder much. Heaven knows I tried to appear so. As to my secret, of course you never heard of that. There is only one person in the world—if, indeed, even that person is living—who knows of it, or, so far as I am aware, so much as suspects it.”

“But, uncle,” she added, after a pause, “there is, just now, so much pity in your face,—so different from what was to be seen there a few moments ago,—that I begin to feel like laying bare my heart to you; partly that you may never make me such a proposition as you have made to-day, and partly that you may afford me, if possible, some spiritual comfort.”

“Certainly, Isabella: by all means do so. I think it quite time I should learn something of your life during the years you were separated from me, since it seems I know nothing of it—at least so little as to have grossly wronged you.”

CHAPTER XIX.

Clown. Say'st thou, that house is dark?

Malvolio. As hell, Sir Topas. — *Twelfth Night.*

If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction. — *Twelfth Night.*

By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. — *As You Like It.*

DO you remember, uncle," the Señorita began, "when those brave Americans—Nolan's men—were marched into San Antonio, as prisoners, ten years ago?"

"Certainly I do. I saw them enter the plaza under guard, with their hands tied behind them."

"And you know how much father thought of Nolan, who so often risked his life, and at last lost it, in laying the foundation of our liberties? Well, father took me—child though I was—to the plaza to see them. I think, however, I could have seen only one of them. At any rate, I have no recollection whatever of the others. That one was quite a youth; and although he was ragged—for he had been captured nearly a year before—and his beautiful hair was tangled and matted from long neglect, I thought at once he was the handsomest man, both in face and form, I had ever seen.

"While father held me by the hand, I stood in front of the stranger, as he sat himself on a stone to rest, and, without knowing what I did, stared at him in silent admiration. At length, when I saw that my father was engaged in conversation with one of the other prisoners, I could not resist the temptation to slip my hand out of his and steal away from him into the young man's lap. He seemed to have taken possession of my very soul, and I could think of nothing

else. I asked him his name. He told me in the richest tones, and I blushed as I told him mine. It did not at first occur to me even to pity him. Indeed, I should have thought — had I thought at all about it — myself the more pitiable of the two.

“At last, while longing to have him put his arm around me and caress me, and wondering why he did not, — thinking him a cold, unloving creature, — I saw that his hands were tied tight behind him. The tears then rushed to my eyes — and to his, too, as I vainly tried to unloose the cords that bound him. Seeing the condition of his hair, I took the comb from my head and combed out his tangled tresses of gold. I knew nothing of what was going on around me until I was awakened from my childish dream of — well, I know not what it was, since it could not have been love at that tender age, I suppose, — by the guard tearing him away from me, to resume their weary tramp to the distant provinces, where the mine or the dungeon awaited them all. I watched them as they filed on through the town. He looked back once, with a long gaze, at us — at *me*, I fondly hoped it was — and the moment he disappeared around the street-corner I rushed into my father’s arms and burst into tears, quite regardless of the crowd. I wept the whole way home, and fretted myself into a fever, of which I was ill for weeks, and which came near bringing me to my grave.

“The prisoners were marched to Chihuahua; and my father, who feared they would be put to death, embraced every opportunity to learn their fate. It would have been vain for him, belonging, as he did, to the liberal party, to make any efforts for their release: it would have been far worse than vain — it would have made their release altogether hopeless. For more than two years they were kept in prison without a trial; and when at last they were

arraigned, the evidence against them was found to be so very slight that the judge ordered them to be set at liberty. But Salcedo, who commanded the northern provinces, remanded them immediately to prison, and sent a copy of the proceedings to the King of Spain.

“Three years afterwards a royal decree was received, ordering that the judge who had released them should be removed from office, and that one out of every five of them should be put to death. As there were only ten at first, and as one had since died, it was decided, after much debate, that but one should be executed. After being caused to kneel around a drum, on which stood a tumbler and dice, the nine were all blindfolded and made to throw by turns — the one throwing the least number to be the victim. I recollect so well when father read aloud to us the account of it from the gazette he had received, which gave the sad details of the affair.

“At this time I was fourteen years of age, and the image which had at first sight, six years before, taken such complete possession of my fancy, so far from fading away with time, had become more vivid to me than ever, whether dreaming or musing; and I waked at last to the consciousness that the intervening years had changed the pity of childhood into love, — which, hopeless though it seemed, was all in all to me — constantly occupying my thoughts and shaping all my visions of happiness; for, that I could be happy in the love of any other seemed to me utterly impossible.

“Following this minute description of the arrangement for throwing the dice, came the name of each and the respective numbers thrown. Of course I knew but one name of them all. It stood very far down on the list, and I thought my father, as he read, would never get to it; and yet when he came to it, how I feared the result! The first man had thrown very low numbers — *three* and *one*; the

next five or six did much better; and when he read, at last, the name of my favorite, my heart throbbed, my brain grew dizzy, and I almost sank to the floor for fear his throw would be lower than the lowest, and so seal his doom; but when it was announced *four* and *one*, I could scarcely refrain from clapping my hands for joy. The poor fellow was executed.

“The remaining eight were sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment—making altogether eighteen dreary years. They were sent to different prisons; and our country—as you know, uncle—is cursed with so many of those gloomy piles that we could never learn where the poor victims were.

“Soon afterwards I went to the beautiful city of Queretaro, and entered the convent-school. That unfortunate prisoner was still the burden of my thoughts. I resolved, if possible, to search every cell in the city-prison. The fathers who had charge of our school often visited the prisoners to give them such spiritual aid as they required. I accompanied them whenever they would suffer me to do so. There was one good old father—Father Cabaso,—with whom I was a great favorite,—who always allowed me to go with him. The girls, as well as the teachers, and indeed all my friends, thought—and it was surely not unreasonable they should—that it was a strange freak for a young lady to frequent such forlorn and filthy places: I but smiled when they so expressed themselves, and let it pass as a freak,—telling no one that it was really the sole aim and hope of my life.

“As soon as we were fairly inside the walls, and the Padre had left me and sought the cell of some lone sufferer, I always threw off my naturally grave manner, and commenced humming strange tunes, and tripping along the dark and narrow passages, intending that the sentinels and

keepers should thus be made to think me some half-witted thing not worth their watching; and, as they knew moreover that I came with the priest, they put but little restraint on my movements; so, I soon had the run of the prison. In this way, I had an opportunity, in the course of several months, to peep, between the bars, into nearly all the cells, one by one, and get a glimpse of their inmates. Besides, I would always get Father Cabaso to tell me the names of those he visited.

“One day, when far in the interior of the vast prison, I somehow became bewildered, and, I suppose, in trying to make my way out, took a wrong turn and went still further into the mazes of the building. The deeper I penetrated the greater grew my confusion, and I began to be seriously alarmed lest I should never get out, but perish in those gloomy recesses. You may know, there was no acting now — no humming snatches of song, as heretofore, — no tripping along the stony floors, — no playing the idiot-girl. All this was forgotten: nay, I should have started at the least sound of even my own voice: the lightest echo of my footsteps along those dreary vaults made my heart throb wildly and my flesh creep with the chill of fear.

“At length I found myself in a low arched passage. This was so dark and damp that, when I recollected I had descended several flights of stairs in my eagerness to find some outlet from the dreadful place, I concluded that I must be then far under ground. Here I stopped, for the first time, and listened breathlessly, hoping to hear a voice, or at least a noise of some kind from one of the apartments over my head, or from some one passing in the street — forgetting how thick were the dismal walls. Not a sound of any kind could I hear.

“My eyes, during the time I was standing here, were of course getting gradually accustomed to the darkness. I

could at first distinguish nothing whatever; then, I could see the gray walls around and above me, though still so indistinctly that I thought them some impalpable illusion within the eye itself or upon the brain, until I cautiously put forth my hand and touched the cold hard surface, down which the beaded damps were trickling—each minute being marked by a drop falling sullenly on the chilly floor. Here I stood, with this cheerless timepiece ticking in my ear, trying to distinguish surrounding objects, which were becoming more and more visible, until at length I could see several great iron bars fixed across a loophole in the wall, while two small points of light shone between them, seeming to come through the opposite wall of a cell to whose interior the loophole led. I stepped nearer, resolved to peep, even at such a time, into that hideous place: *he* might be even there. Scarcely had I done so, when I found that the two points of light, which I had imagined to come from the outer air, were a pair of eyeballs glaring close upon me through the grate. I stood transfixed to the spot. I trembled in every limb, but still gazed, as though spell-bound, on those glowering orbs. The next moment, I heard my name come forth from the dungeon before me, distinct enough indeed, but in tones so hollow and unnatural that I screamed at the top of my voice and ran away, well-nigh frenzied with terror. It seemed to me, at the moment, that no mere human eye could have recognized my features in such dense darkness; and as the voice was so unearthly, I thought the whole thing the nightmare of some horrible dream. But when I found my scream did not wake me, I concluded this was no dream indeed, but that supernatural powers were at work in this Stygian air. I had no time then to reflect, as I afterwards did, that eyes long immured in such a place could accommodate themselves even to such Cimmerian darkness as there surrounded me.

"I rushed at random along the windings of that dismal labyrinth — turning — ascending — descending — wherever there was a way clear before me. I had no object in view but that of motion, — afraid that if I stopped only for a moment, a cold ghastly hand would be laid upon my bare shoulder — an icy breath would din dreadful words into my ear. Although I could not have been thus occupied longer than a few minutes at most, it seemed an age. But my scream had been heard by those who had already descended to those subterranean depths in search of me; for Father Cabaso having missed me, had given the alarm. The faint sound of approaching steps and the dim glimmer of a lantern sufficed to stay my wild flight from the spectre of my terrified fancy. No sooner was I assured of aid at hand than I swooned away. When I recovered, I found myself in one of the upper apartments, with Father Cabaso bending over me. He very naturally attributed my completely unnerved condition solely to my getting lost in the dreary mazes below; and as that was amply sufficient to account for it, I did not then choose to enlighten him further. As soon as we reached the convent, however, I told him all about my prison adventure — who I thought the prisoner was, and how, years before, I had chanced to meet with him in my native town. Then, falling at his feet, I implored him, in the name of heaven and humanity, to visit, if possible, the suffering victim.

"Father Cabaso had a soft heart, and was easily persuaded on this occasion. Indeed, to do him justice, I cannot suppose he would have required any persuasion, but only a simple statement of the facts. I thought, however, in my anxiety, that a show of interest on my part — as I knew I had influence with him — would be the safer plan — at least, could do no harm. He returned to the prison immediately, and, on questioning the keeper of the

underground cells, he admitted — evidently with much reluctance — that there was a political convict there, whom no one but himself ever visited, — and he only to place his food and drink at the grate.

“The good Father expressed great indignation that the priests had never been told of such an inmate, that they might administer to his comfort. The inhuman keeper replied that, as the prisoner was a heretic as well as a traitor, he supposed the holy men would, of course, take no interest in him, — and so he had never mentioned him in their presence. There he had been, in that dreadful hole, for three years!

“After persuasion and threats had alike failed to secure his admission to the prisoner, the Father succeeded at last in gaining entrance by bribing the keeper with a large sum of money, which I gave him for the purpose, — having sold some of my jewels to procure it. When he entered the cell, he found, by aid of a lantern, that starvation and inhuman treatment, and their necessary result — a low form of fever — had so far done their work on the unfortunate victim, that he could live but a few days longer if allowed to remain in that condition.

“Relieving his immediate wants as well as he could amid the discouraging surroundings, Father Cabaso next set himself about the task — and a very formidable one it was — of influencing the authorities to allow the prisoner to be sent to the city hospital. At length, after a great many interviews with the Governor and the Captain-General, and much importunity and earnest solicitation, assisted by the certificate of an influential physician, — that the prisoner’s life might be still saved by the course proposed, but that otherwise he must die in a very short time, — the Padre carried his point, and the poor prisoner was transferred to the hospital.

“When I first visited him there, although he recognized me immediately on my entrance,—putting forth from the couch where he lay his thin, trembling hand, and smiling,—I could not for the life of me bring myself to believe, at once, that this was the beau-ideal of my childhood,—and, indeed, if the truth must be told, of all my intervening years. Unfortunately, I had not thought very seriously of the sad changes which his trying situation must necessarily have wrought in his appearance. It may have been very thoughtless—or if you choose, very foolish—in me, but I really half expected to see him the handsome hero that he was six years before; for his image had been kept as fresh in my memory during all those years as it was on the first and only day I had seen him. I was ill prepared, therefore, as you may well know, for the shock which I was destined to receive on this memorable occasion.

“On my first look at his face, I stood and stared at him, much as I had done in the plaza at San Antonio; but, oh,—except the pity which I felt in both instances,—with what different feelings! There was not a single trace of his beautiful self. He was so emaciated, that the skin seemed resting directly against the bones, with no intervening flesh. His eyes shone with a sort of phosphorescent light; and, as the pupils had not yet contracted from the unnatural size which they had attained in the dark of his dungeon, I seemed, while gazing into their depths, to be looking into a cavern, where I could see a soul struggling to be free from its fleshy shred. Through those enlarged windows I could almost imagine I saw all the secret thoughts of the unhappy man.

“Despite the fever which wore him, there was no trace of color in his hollow cheek. His long beard was unkempt and scrawny. His hair had lost, in that vile den of blackness, its sunny hue and sheen as completely as if directly

dependent for these on day's glorious orb. It was dry, harsh, and frizzled — like hair that has been shrivelled dead by a whisk of flame: it looked as though, if shaken, it would fly off into dust. Indeed, the mould of death seemed to rest over hair, beard, and face alike. Oh! as I saw all this, I wondered how he could be alive.

“He still continued to hold out his hand, and seeing that I did not come forward at once — doubtless little knowing himself how fearfully he was changed — he called my name in a subdued and gentle tone. His voice, as he did so, seemed to have lost much of that appalling hollowness which had so shocked me when echoed from the walls of the dungeon, and in it alone, of all that was before me, could I recognize any trace of my hero. His calling my name broke the spell by which I was bound to the spot where I stood, and I rushed at once to his side.

“It is useless to say how faithfully I nursed him through the long weary days and nights during which his life hung on a frail thread. He seemed, all this time, to grow neither better nor worse. When, at last, the scale turned a little in his favor, how anxiously did I watch for the first dawning on his face of those manly beauties of old, which I knew the recovery of his health must needs give him back. One by one they came: but, oh, how slowly! — at first, scarcely to be seen, — then, flitting away and returning like an escaped bird loth to be retaken, — but remaining longer and longer, each time, till settled at last.

“But it was weeks after this, before he could even rise from his couch; and as soon as he did so, the cruel wretches began to talk of putting him back into that horrible cell, — as though, indeed, they had suffered him to be taken out of it for the sole purpose of prolonging his life, that they might have the delight of torturing him again, instead of the trouble of burying him.

“It was too dreadful to think of! To see those eyes that had but just got used to the upper light, to which the all-wise God had so well adapted them, go down again to those hideous shades; that manly form, which He had made erect to walk His beautiful earth, to be now consigned to the narrow bounds of a living tomb,—there to be dwarfed, and shrivelled, and distorted from the proud comeliness of the image of God!

“I therefore proposed to him—desperate though the plan seemed, in his weak condition—to attempt an escape from the hospital before he should be transferred—offering to aid him all in my power. He at first refused,—saying, he would rather go back to prison and run all its fearful risks, than implicate me in so grave a political offence. But that very night he lay awake and concocted a plan, in which, although I was to give my assistance, it was not at all probable that I should ever be detected.

“The guard of the hospital was to be bribed to let him pass, about sunset. By the aid of a friend, he was to be disguised as a Mexican citizen, that the corrupted guard might have a plausible pretext for not stopping him as he should pass out. The hospital was in the eastern suburbs; he was to make his way on foot, until he had cleared all the houses. He was then to turn off into the woods and secrete himself. When night should come, in order to elude his pursuers, he was to make a circuit around the city and enter on the side opposite the point at which he had left it. I was to be in waiting for him at the public fountain,—which, as you know, is near the western suburb,—and guide him to the house of a faithful friend whose kind offices I was to secure to shelter him under her roof until he should regain his full strength. Then, when all pursuit and all hope of re-capturing him should have subsided, his difficulties would have but fairly commenced: he was to

attempt the herculean task of making his way to the United States, through Texas, on foot—a distance of fifteen hundred miles—travelling only by night.

“This plan was carried out. I had sold all my remaining jewels, and had given him the gold they brought, to bear him on his dreary journey. Whether he ever succeeded in reaching his native land or not, I have never been able to learn; nor do I even know whether he is now alive. I never saw him after the night I guided him to the house where he was to sojourn. A vague rumor had, somehow, got abroad that he had never left the city. I was suspected of having indirectly aided in his escape from the hospital, and was therefore closely watched day and night by the official spies,—so that an interview would have been extremely hazardous to both.

“I may as well say, however, that, while in the hospital, as soon as he had begun fairly to recover from his prostrate condition and to be himself again, he had told me of his love; and I suppose it is almost useless to add that it was fully returned.

“For weeks and months my suspense was dreadful, wholly ignorant, as I was, of his fate,—whether he had made good his way out of the miserable country, or had perished of cold or starvation in the long stretch of mountain and desert which he had to traverse; or whether some of the many bands of robbers that infest the way, had plundered and murdered him; or whether—and this would indeed have been the worst fate of all—he was retaken on the route, perhaps just as he was getting home, and plunged once more into the gloom of some dungeon.

“When I was sent to New Orleans to finish my education, I used every effort to ascertain his fate. Among other means, I advertised in the gazettes of the country, requesting to be informed, by any one who might know,

whether or not he was still living—and where. But I never could learn a word of him; and when the time came to return home I was still in the depths of despair.

“Up to this time, I had not recovered my flesh and strength and my olden flow of spirits, which, from the day of our parting, I began to lose. My eye had grown dim, they said; the color had left my cheek, and I could not enjoy the society even of my dearest friends. It seemed, indeed, that the longer I lived the more miserable I became.

“At length came an invitation from my aunt, to visit her at the Capital. It seemed indeed like the very mockery of woe to accept such a bid: yet I did accept it. The truth is, grief had by this time told so terribly on my health, that I felt I must do something to divert my mind from brooding over these untold sorrows—or I must die; and as for death, I doubt not you will believe me, uncle, when I tell you I knew full well I was not fit for *that*. So, strange as it may seem, I caught eagerly at a season to be spent at the Capital to snatch me from the grave. My dear parents could not fail to see—as, indeed, no one could—that my strength and health were sinking day by day, and they were seriously alarmed; but little did they dream of the cause of my decline. They urged me to go—hoping benefit from the change.

“My kind father gave me a splendid outfit, and soon I was on my way to the city of Mexico. When I reached it, I plunged at once into its gayeties, and was soon whirling in the vortex of its social splendors. But, uncle, what you have already recounted of my career must have referred to this season at the Capital. Though, as I said, you did me gross wrong in many respects, in others your picture was a true one. Inasmuch, however, as I corrected your misapprehensions at the time you uttered them, I will not here repeat what I then said. Yet I will further ex-

plain that my sole object was not vanity, as you charged, but the distraction of my wretched thoughts,—and I was only too willing to embrace *anything* that seemed to promise such a boon. When one of your sex meets with a grievous disappointment of that kind, he is fain to seek the bloody field, even in an unjust cause, and wade in wild carnage—ay, and gloat as he wades. And although *his* conquests are really achieved to ease the pangs of a stricken heart, they are all set down to his honor—his name is bruited abroad, and he is made a hero. I have known many such instances. But when woman would strive to forget her broken heart in the bloodless conquest of gay cavaliers, whose wounds are soon healed by other eyes as bright, and other lips perchance as false in the end, *she*, forsooth, is branded as a heartless flirt.

“Still, uncle, I know I was wrong. I knew it at the time—and all the time; nor, if it is any comfort to you to hear it, did I escape the just punishment even then; for that season of revel, and dance, and song, and of all that was gay and gorgeous, was, I think, without exception, the most miserable of my whole miserable life.

“Then came the Revolution; and it was a great relief to me individually, even apart from the hopes which it held out for our freedom. For I now put aside at once my jewels and laces, my wiles and revels, and took my stand by the cheerless couches of our wounded heroes. Nor have I felt, for one moment since, the least desire to return to those empty ways and baubles of fashion. They have lost their attraction, and never more can they have charms for me. And yet you would force them back upon me now—or something most unpleasantly akin to them. And for what? Why—with shame be it said!—that I may wrong one who has proved our benefactor to such degree that our eternal gratitude is due him, instead.”

CHAPTER XX.

I have unclasp'd
To thee the book even of my secret soul. — *Twelfth Night*.

I do not seek to quench your love's hot fire,
But qualify the fires of extreme rage,
Lest it should burn above the bounds of reason.
Two Gentlemen of Verona.

THE Señorita recounted her story with much feeling throughout,—so that, by the time she had ended, her heart was filled well-nigh to overflowing with its various emotions. The Padre was really much moved by her recital; but, for policy's sake, not wishing to appear so, he had affected, from beginning to end, an indifference, to the extent, at times, even of appearing bored. This coldness on the part of her relative annoyed her no little; but she was resolved that it should not chill the current of her narrative when once begun. This seemed to flow forth like lava from her breast, where all the elements of her nature—the dross no less than the gold—were molten down together by the heat of a passion which this sad retrospection had rekindled in all its original intensity.

During the latter part, the Padre was carrying on in his mind a sort of double process. He was not only listening to every word of the fair speaker, but at the same time was thinking what course he should pursue when she should have finished: so that, no sooner had she paused, than he was ready to begin.

“Isabella,” he said, “although this was, beyond all doubt, a case of true love on your part, I can see no very good ground for supposing that the gentleman himself felt more than gratitude. He could scarcely do less than say

he loved you, after your unwavering devotion for so many years, crowned by your noble efforts to save his life, and by sacrifices, too, which imperilled your own."

"How, sir, can you be so cruel? It is not so: it cannot be so. Oh, no — no — he loved me!" exclaimed the Señorita, bursting into tears.

"Well, then," calmly replied the priest, "why has he not visited you since, at San Antonio?"

"*He* visit me at San Antonio?" echoed the lady — repressing her tears, plainly with great effort. "Why, uncle, you surely did not hear my story. What would his life have been worth had he dared show himself there even for a moment?"

"True!" said the Padre promptly, — seeing his blunder, though nowise disconcerted thereby. "But, at any rate, Isabella, the least he could do would have been to communicate with you, and let you know that he still loved you."

"Uncle," replied the Señorita, "surely you either have a bad cause, or you plead it very loosely. Have you then forgotten — I know *he* has not forgotten it — that our tyrants have their swarms of spies, who search every stranger and open every letter that enters the country; and that, had he written, not only would I have been implicated, but my whole family must have shared the fearful consequences?"

The uncle did not reflect that his niece had probably run, a hundred times a day, over all the *pros* and *cons* bearing on this and every kindred subject; and that she must, therefore, have greatly the advantage of him in discussing such questions.

"Perhaps this is even so. But, Isabella," pursued his Reverence — finding she had got the better of him on these points, and resolved on a diversion to secure his triumph in this controversial arena, upon which, as was

made sufficiently evident some time back, he had entered as a special pleader, and not at all for truth's sake — “But, Isabella, I was arguing only on the violent assumption that he is still living, — which, however, I have no idea is really the case. Nor can I conceive how you can so hope against hope. If he attempted his escape by land, the arid wastes that he had to traverse, and the bleak and desolate mountains that lie directly across his track, are obstacles which, even if no savage robbers frequented them, it would be utterly impossible that one in his feeble condition could surmount. On the other hand, should he look to the water for transit and succeed in making his way to the Gulf, — which would be in itself no easy matter, — there would even then not be one chance in a hundred that a ship would be found there to convey him to a friendly shore.

“No, Isabella,” the Padre went on after a pause. “I have little doubt that your friend — or lover, as you choose to call him — has long since succumbed to famine or violence, and that his bones are bleaching somewhere along the thousand miles or more which, in his desperation, he essayed to traverse.”

“Uncle, I cannot think it!” said the Señorita, — the tears starting afresh at the horrible idea. “I have an abiding hope that he escaped.”

“I know you have,” the other replied; “and it is just because I do not wish you to hope any longer against hope and drag out your life in one unbroken, bitter disappointment, that I give you the only view which a reasonable being — one not wholly blinded, like yourself, by passion — can take.

“And now, my dear niece,” added his Reverence, more in a tone of soothing compassion than he had before shown, “between the probability, on the one hand, amounting almost to a certainty, that he has perished, — and on the other,

the supposition — very reasonable, to say the least — that, if he did escape, he has already led to the altar some one of his fair countrywomen, to atone, in the quiet of domestic happiness for his prolonged and horrible sufferings; — with this view of the case, I must say I think you had much better give up these desperate longings, which can only end in being dashed at last. Should you ever meet with him in the future, I doubt not you will find him exceedingly grateful for your noble efforts in his behalf — but no more. And pray tell me, what comfort could mere gratitude, even the warmest, afford one in your state of mind — craving the intensest love?

“It amounts to this, then,” he continued, after awaiting a reply for a little while, during which she wept, but said not a word: “If he lost his life in his attempt to escape, or afterward, from the exposure to which the attempt subjected him, you can, of course, never hope to see him again this side the grave; while, if he is still living, and wedded to another, you would not, or at least should not, wish ever to meet with him again. Let me advise you, therefore: make up your mind to assume at once the same relative position to the world that you would now occupy had he never lived, or had you never met him. Forget him, or, if you cannot do that, at least think of him only as one who is in the other world, or beyond your reach in this.”

“Uncle,” she at length replied, “I do indeed begin to think, with you, that he must have perished; but let me say, you make little impression on me when you intimate that, if still alive, he does not love me. I am quite as certain not only that he loved me then, but that he loves me still, as I am that there is a God in heaven.”

“Well, my child, grant that he did love you, and does love you still, even as devotedly as you believe,” said the Padre, — gracefully abandoning his previous position, since,

to hold it in the face of a faith so earnest was next to hopeless,— “do you not see, nevertheless, that the impossibility of his ever reaching you or of communicating with you,— as you so lately explained, to my entire satisfaction,—would cancel the betrothal, and justify his wedding with some one else, even though he could not love her with the same devotion?”

“If he is another’s,” she exclaimed with passion, “then, indeed, I do not wish to meet him ever again. Nor, then, could I bear to mix longer with the world.

“Oh, uncle!” she cried in her agony, at the thought of that love which she had so long and so fondly cherished, proving at last hopeless, at the same time throwing herself at the Padre’s feet and clasping his knees, “I long to retire from this wretched world: it is so full of sin and suffering—love blighted—hopes crushed—friends murdered! I long for the quiet shades of the convent, where I may forget all but heaven, where such things cannot come.”

“Why may I not go there?” she demanded, looking up pleadingly in his face. “Is there any reason why I should not?”

“Yes, my child,” replied the priest; “the convent is no place for you now. It is intended for such as have no further mission in the outside world.”

“And what have I yet to do or suffer in this groaning world?” she asked. “Tell me—and I will hasten to do and endure my portion, that I may be free to bid such scenes farewell forever.”

“I fear, Isabella,” replied the priest, “that you are not the heroine I had hoped you were, when you can allow your ravings over an utterly hopeless passion to neutralize so much that is available in you for good. You seem, in this momentary blindness, to have lost sight of the fact that our bleeding country calls all her true children to her

aid. Yea — all — not only such as can strike bloody blows for her freedom, but those, too, who can urge others to strike, who else would but look idly on. Rise, then, above this one private grief," continued the holy man, assisting her from her lowly attitude. "Think of the millions that suffer — of the unborn millions that are yet to suffer, if tyranny be not struck down in our wretched land. Think no more of the convent. Though the desolation of the struggle might never reach your eye in those hushed recesses, nor the shriek of its victims your ear, yet rumors of the strife could not be wholly shut out; and when you heard them there, you would have to nurse the sharp remorse that you shrank from your duty, turned a deaf ear to your country in her sorest need, and selfishly sequestered yourself — leaving your fellow-citizens and friends to breast the merciless torrent without you — yet for you. Then, dry your tears, my child: go to your room, think on what I have said, and I doubt not your cooler reflections will induce you to forgo this folly, and to do all you can for the cause. I doubt not that in the end you will leave no stone unturned to influence this noble Chieftain and his brave fellows to render that aid which I am well convinced is vital to our success. Your duty, not only to your country, but to God, demands this of you; and in so doing, should you commit any peccadillos, think of them lightly: the glorious end we have in view shall justify them all. Or should your conscience whisper you, at any time, that heaven is not fully appeased, you have but to come to me, and confess wherein you doubt, and I will give you free absolution for all."

Isabella, without making reply, sought her room, leaving her uncle to his meditations on what had passed. Once in the solitude of her own chamber, she began to recall the conversation, — which, indeed, she had little

difficulty in doing, inasmuch as every word had been vividly impressed on her mind at the time of its utterance. She dwelt more particularly on what had been said of the painful past — the Padre's theory, namely, — that her lover either had died, or had forgotten her. During the interview — especially the latter part of it — she had well-nigh given him up as forever lost to her in one or the other of those almost equally dreadful modes, — the latter perhaps the more dreadful. But now that she came to think the matter over, her heart clung so yearningly to its memory of him, that she felt it would be the laceration of her very soul to abandon all hope of ever meeting him again — and then not as another's — but all her own — just as in the olden time.

“If still living and loving me,” — such were her thoughts as she lay on her couch near the window, looking out on the waters of the lake, which, sporting, as they were just then, with the noonday beams, may have aided in inspiring her with the fleeting hope which she now indulged, — “he will surely join our standard on these borders as soon as he hears of this projected invasion. It will be his first chance to reach my home, where he has every reason to suppose I am at this time. I do not wonder in the least that he has never yet attempted to reach it: indeed, I should have been alarmed for him had I heard of his making any such desperate effort heretofore. But if he hears of what is now on foot hereabouts, he surely ought to fly hither from any part of the world. I am certain I would do as much to meet with *him*. Ah! have I not already done as much?”

“But, then, if his own country is in danger from a foreign foe — as they say it is — would he come *then*? Could he be expected to leave his country in her time of trial? Ought he to prefer me to his country? Would I

prefer *him* to *my* country? Why, I would die for my country, if my death could save it. Well, so would I die for *him*. Their claims seem equal: so, too, are the chances of his coming or not — that is, if he is still alive. But, alas! my uncle says his bones are whitening in the desert!

“I fear there is indeed no hope. Henceforth, then, must I be in love only with freedom; and if that be torn from me too, and my poor country be made hideous with the sweep of desolation and the clanking of chains, then, with no duty left me to perform in the outer world, the sombre shades of Queretaro’s convent may at last receive me, with no danger from the stings of remorse for having neglected my mission.”

CHAPTER XXI.

He hath known you but three days, and already you are no stranger.

Twelfth Night.

I am Cressid’s uncle,
That dare leave two together: fare you well.

All’s Well That Ends Well.

If I help, what do you promise me?

All’s Well That Ends Well.

Do’t, and thou hast the one-half of my heart.

Winter’s Tale.

FOR reasons best known to himself — though I suspect policy formed their basis — several days elapsed before Gatewood again visited the lake. By this time all traces of the impression which the conversation with her uncle had produced upon the Señorita, were erased — at least to outward seeming. She received the Captain just as she

would have done had she never told the priest her sad story and heard his discouraging comment thereon, or his expressed opinion which led to the recital of that story; namely, that their guest was smitten with her charms. Even under ordinary circumstances it would have been a debatable question whether or not she would have been justifiable in repelling him by the coldness of her manner, on an intimation received from a third party of near kinship, that the Captain looked upon her as dearer than a mere friend. But, taking into consideration how much she owed this stranger—how much they all owed him—such restraint would not have been impolite merely—but rude and ungrateful. It would be ample time, surely, when he himself should make known to her with his own lips, any feeling which he might entertain warmer than friendship—it would surely be time enough then to reveal her true sentiments in the matter.

So the Captain's visit passed off without the least stiffness or restraint on the part of any. The Padre,—after the all-engrossing subject of politics had been exhausted,—like the man of varied reading and observation that he was, made himself agreeable on the many topics which came up, failing not, as he proceeded, to glean from his well-informed guest facts, both useful and entertaining, touching the history and condition of his own country. Isabella proved herself an appreciative listener; though not in that passive capacity alone was she content to contribute to the general entertainment,—but occasionally unfolded from her well-stored mind such glimpses of knowledge concerning the themes under discussion as gave earnest of her mental wealth.

From this time forth, the Captain visited these agreeable strangers every day or two, and at length scarcely a day passed that he did not seek their society. In a month

more he may be said to have almost made it his home; and, to all appearance, never was guest domiciliated in a way more agreeable not only to himself but likewise to his entertainers.

At length he ventured, at intervals, to make the Señorita certain presents — trifling, at first, to be sure, though all very handsome of their kind — which he doubtless had peculiar facilities for procuring from New Orleans. He began with such as he thought would contribute to her amusement and diversion; for he naturally judged that, in her situation, time must pass but tardily. These were chess, backgammon, cards, *et cetera*. Then, there must needs be some one to play with her. This want he, of course, was at no loss to supply — and that, too, very far short of the Crescent City. At another time, he brought a splendid hammock, and hung it himself picturesquely beneath the trees. Soon afterwards he brought certain fruits of the chase — not such, indeed, as were either meet or meat for the table; for to supply the strangers with such was, with him, an every-day matter — but beautifully ornamented skins, taken from wild animals which he had killed with his own hand. He well knew that the Spaniards and their descendants were a lazy people, fond of taking things calmly and coolly, and much given to lolling about in free and easy style. So, these skins — which, after being tanned, he had caused to be tastefully garnished, most probably by some of the women who frequented the camp — soon took their places beneath the trees, in the immediate vicinity of the suspended hammock. One of them had been taken from a black bear, through whose skull Gatewood had thought it best to send a pistol-ball, by way of assisting Grim, who was paying his respects to the powerful creature's throat: for this bear was so unusually large, that, for once, the hunter was afraid that doughty canine might not be able to hold his own in the struggle.

The two remaining robes were composed, each, of a half-dozen skins — the one, of tiger-cats — the other, of leopard-cats. These beautiful animals — presenting the brightest spots and stripes that can be conceived — differ, in no respect, from the Bengal tiger and the African leopard, excepting, of course, that they are much smaller — as indeed the adjunct implies — and proportionately less formidable, though, still, next to the panther, the most formidable animal in that region.

And here beneath the trees might often be seen a lounging trio: the Señorita swinging in listless repose in her tasselled hammock, while the Padre and the Captain were reclining near on their respective robes, — the weather, even in winter, being seldom such as to drive them to the shelter of the house. Then again the guest would challenge the lady to cards or backgammon, and they would sit on the robes and play by the hour.

One day, Gatewood brought his hostess a very welcome gift in the shape of a guitar, not only deftly constructed and exceedingly comely to look on, but of passing richness of tone. On this she often accompanied herself, singing some Spanish ballad, usually of the patriotic sort, and invariably composed in a plaintive strain. Sometimes the Chief would give the aid of his deep voice, proving himself no contemptible singer, — though he usually refrained from joining her, vastly preferring, he said, that her tones alone should be heard. This admiration may have shown somewhat his partiality as a lover, yet it proved likewise his good taste, for, truth to say, there were but few who could excel the Señorita in quality of singing, while her touch upon the guitar was something exquisite, and to be thought of long after the tones she evoked had died away.

She did not see proper to refuse any of these presents, in

great measure, doubtless, because a refusal might tend to wound the feelings of the donor, which, for reasons already sufficiently dwelt upon, she was loth to do. When, at last, however, he brought her a beautiful and costly set of jewelry, she would not accept it.

“Captain Gatewood, I know, will excuse me,” she said to him on the occasion of his proffering it, “when I tell him that, on the breaking out of the war in my native country, I parted with all my jewelry for two reasons: In the first place, I wanted to aid the patriots to the amount it would bring in currency; and then I did not feel as though I ought to display about my person such emblems of gayety while there was so much suffering among my friends, and so much of their precious blood was being shed. I therefore made a resolution that I would indulge in no display of the kind while the dreadful struggle lasted.”

To such reasonable grounds for rejecting his offer, the Captain could scarcely have found it in his heart to object, even had he been looking for some cause of quarrel with his fair hostess,—which, I am confident, the reader will believe me when I say he was far from doing.

It is worthy of note, perhaps, that the Captain, with all his presents to the lady, never once gave her a single book, although such a gift would probably—taking all things into consideration—have been more appropriate, as it would certainly have been more appreciated, than any other. Now, the truth is, a present of books was the first thing he thought of and noted down while sending his orders to the city. But, on second sober thought, he argued within himself, that, even as it was, he would find difficulties enough in the way of winning the Señorita, and that with agreeable books as his rivals (himself to introduce them, too!) he would not stand half the chance he otherwise might do, to gain her affections. So, the many

books which he had at first set down — very interesting ones, too — were erased from the list, and he selfishly confined his orders to such articles as she should be, in a measure, constrained to share with him, to the end that she might enjoy them herself.

While these two were getting into the way of conversing, singing, and gaming together, the Padre was, somehow, getting — though not quite so gradually — into the way of going daily into town, to learn the news, not only for his own gratification, he said, but that his niece also might be properly informed of what was transpiring in the busy world, from which fate had so signally cut them both off. The Señorita thought it not altogether the right thing that he who was now as a father to her, should leave her so much with the stranger. Once, she went so far as to remonstrate gently with him touching the matter. He, in explanation of his seemingly negligent conduct, represented to her how, during Magee's and Bernardo's absence, the entire duty and responsibility of looking after the interests of the cause had been devolved upon his surpliced shoulders. How there were often tidings to be gathered in town, on which immediate action must be taken. How there were daily arrivals there of persons from the United States, whom it was absolutely necessary that he should see, as temporary head of the concern, in order to expedite the organization of the impending campaign. And so forth and so on.

These various excuses — and it is perhaps not too much to say, that, had a hundred others been needed to carry the holy man's end, they would all have been forthcoming — seemed to Isabella so plausible that she never again ventured to trouble him on that score. Now, the simple truth is, his Reverence — so far as any or all the above pleas for thus unseasonably absenting himself were concerned —

need not have gone into Natchitoches oftener than once a week, at most. His real object—to his shame, cloth and all, be it said (cloth in particular)—was not only to throw the two together as much as possible, without the restraint of his presence, but also to make Gatewood's company—since she had no other—well-nigh indispensable to his niece, to the end that the love-masked petard, which he supposed would some day inevitably hoist the Captain, might not be prematurely exploded to the infinite detriment of the cause.

In justice to the Señorita, we would say here, once for all, that although she was by no means blameless in this matter, there is much to be urged in extenuation of her conduct. Here is a young lady accustomed, all her life, not only to the very best society, but likewise to all those means afforded by wealth to make the heavy-winged hours glide pleasantly away. She suddenly finds herself transported, by the fortunes of war, from such luxurious scenes, and set down in the midst of a howling wilderness. As though this was not in itself a hard enough blow of fate, she is next deserted by those who alone could have made her existence tolerable under such trying circumstances—for none of my readers will, I hope, for a moment suppose that the two old Mexican servants, steeped as they were in ignorance and superstition, could do more than supply her mere bodily wants. Here, too, is a young,—or, at most, a middle-aged man,—who is trying his best to make her time pass pleasantly. He is intelligent, handsome, agreeable; nay, more—he is, so far as she can judge, and for aught she has ever heard to the contrary, a man of noble impulses. And even more than that, again,—more, at least, to her,—he has saved herself and her dearest friends from a tragic fate.

What then was she to do? Was she very much to

blame, think you really, for merely giving him a most capital chance to fall in love with her, if he was so disposed?

And even after she found out—not, indeed, by word of mouth, but by the more subtle test of look and manner—that this was already even so, should she be very harshly censured that she did not, even then, do that which would at once have driven him from her, and have thrown her back again on her own slender resources for whiling away the weary hours? More than once he had absented himself for a day or two, and she thought, each time, that the late evening hour, which always brought her uncle back to break her solitude, would never come.

Is it to be wondered, even that, once or twice, when he introduced the subject of love in a general way, and she had good reason to think he designed giving it presently a personal turn, that he might learn his fate once for all,—is it matter of wonder, I say, that she averted the crisis by abruptly changing the subject? Thus did she put him off from day to day, from week to week, from month to month, though she must have known, all the time, full well—as woman does—that the will-o'-the-wisp—which, if she had not kindled it and set it a-going, in the first place for his delusion, she had at least taken special care not to extinguish—was leading him, each one of those days, and weeks, and months, still deeper into the slough, where she, even now, intended that, at no very distant day, she would leave him in his despair.

At length, however, one moonlight night, when they sat under the trees as usual,—the Padre having early sought his couch on the plea of weariness,—Gatewood opened the subject so abruptly, and, from his manner of doing it, seemed so firmly resolved to be heard then and there, that she was in a measure obliged to allow him to proceed.

“Señorita,” he began, “justice to myself, even if you

will admit no other plea, absolutely demands that I should tell you before we separate to-night, of the feelings which I have cherished towards you from the moment of our first meeting, and of the hopes to which they have given birth. I have already attempted this more than once; but you have always evaded the matter. I beg of you, as you value my happiness, let there be an end of all this suspense, one way or the other. Let there be no more subterfuge — if I may be allowed the expression — no more parrying of my words, as though you thought them poisoned daggers aimed at your life. But I find I have already told you my secret, — if, indeed, it has been any secret to you from the first. Need I say more? Alas! I find that the fullest heart may be the least eloquent of its precious burden. Just when I hoped my passion would inspire me to plead my cause in befitting language, my tongue is well-nigh paralyzed. But what matters it, Señorita? You well know what my heart would say, though my lips refuse.”

Gatewood, considering how deeply he was smitten, got on with the first two or three sentences of his little petition quite as glibly as he could have expected. But, instead of improving as he warmed with the momentous theme, and pouring forth, at the last, an irresistible torrent of passion, that would, he hoped, bear down every obstacle, he hesitated — stammered — and, indeed, broke down so signally in the end, that he not only became painfully conscious of failure, but fairly trembled with the intensity of his emotion — doubtless made the more intense by being smouldered within for want of the vent of expression. His fiery burst was much like that of the over-laden volcano, which, striving to give vent to the molten mass that burns and burdens it, chokes with very fulness, and sends nothing forth, but heaves and trembles with the workings of the pent-up lava.

The lady addressed, however,—as was but too evident,—partook of his emotions to a very limited extent only.

“Captain,” she coolly replied, “I will not affect ignorance of what your manner, much more than your language, has told me, not only to-night, but for months. I do not pretend to judge how serious such matters may prove to your sex: it may be that you can throw them off lightly from your hearts, or they may be all in all to you. But I *do* know that it is a momentous thing for a woman to bestow her heart and her hand. You censure me for putting you off at various times without a hearing. I then knew full well that I could not return your love. Now, do you think it very cruel, that instead of telling you so—as I should have been compelled to do had I spoken then—I changed the subject again and again, that I might have longer time to consider?”

“Then,” said the ardent suitor,—drawing near under the influence of the hope which he thought was implied in her words, and taking her hand gently in his own,—“let me trust that you are ready now to decide what is so essential to my happiness.”

“But,” she replied, extricating her hand from his, “what, if I say that, if you insist on an answer now, it must still be adverse? while if you allow me the opportunity of a longer acquaintance, it may be auspicious?”

“On such terms I am willing to postpone the matter still further,” replied Gatewood, fancying he perceived considerable encouragement in her words.

“But in the meantime,” he added, after a pause, “if there is anything I can do, either to win your love or to prove still further my own, let me know, that I may be favored in the one case, or tested in the other.”

Now, it chanced that the Señorita had resolved that if a favorable opportunity should ever present, she would

broach the subject of his aiding that cause with which all her interests and all her thoughts were so closely identified; and she was just then planning the best mode of accomplishing it without seeming to rush abruptly into a matter, which, it was but too evident, was one of bargain and sale. She was glad, therefore, that his last remark offered her so good an opening. Nor is it by any means impossible that the Captain designed this remark as an introduction to what he himself had presently to say on that very subject. Or, on the other hand, he may only have thrown it out as a lure, to lead the lady first to introduce the topic. Be this as it may, she did not suffer the opportunity to go long unavailed of.

“Why, Captain, how much would you be willing to do?” she asked, carelessly.

“Anything, Señorita,” he replied, with no little earnestness: “anything at all, that is possible, will I do, or at least try to do, to win you or to prove myself worthy of you. Hercules’ labors would scarcely be too much to undertake for such a meed, if it could not be gained with less.”

“Prove yourself worthy of me, indeed! That, at least, no longer remains for you to do. No, indeed,—you have done that long since. God forbid that I should so far forget the claims of gratitude, as to put to such a test one who has already snatched me—at the fearful risk of his own life—and those as dear to me as myself, from so much suffering, and even from death. But as regards my *love*, there is only one way in which *that* can be won by mortal.”

“And that is —”

Although Gatewood’s conjecture as to what she meant was quite correct, yet not wishing to incur the risk of a blunder on so vital a point, he broke off the sentence, designedly throwing the fragment into the interrogatory form by his mode of emphasizing it.

"Devotion to my country's cause, to be sure," replied Isabella.

"Henceforth then," exclaimed the Chief, with enthusiasm, genuine or marvellously well assumed, "I am your country's champion."

"Yet do not misapprehend me," she rejoined instantly: "I don't say that will certainly do it—but only that nothing else possibly can."

"I conceive that your terms are exceeding hard, Señorita," said the lover despondingly, "if you mean that it is barely possible you may smile on me after all the sacrifices I may make in the cause, and the many hardships I may endure—the many dangers I may encounter."

"Nevertheless, I do mean," replied the lady, who, now that her country was the theme, had lost the cool apathy with which she had discussed love, and was all aglow with patriotic fervor, "that no one who refuses to strike for Mexico—or, at least, for Texas—can by any possibility hope for such favor from me. On the other hand, I do not now see how I could find it in my heart to frown on the suit of one who should prove himself one of the chief heroes in establishing the freedom of my native province. It would, of course, turn on the degree of love I should by that time bear him; and although I cannot be expected to decide prospectively how much that would be, yet I think I can venture to say, it must needs be great."

"Then am I a champion of your cause from this time forth," said the Chief with enthusiastic eagerness.

"On the other hand," she went on, without seeming to heed the impulsive interruption, "should we fail—should the darkness and blight of despotism settle again on my country, and on my beloved Texas, I shall seek the life-long seclusion of the convent."

"It shall be no fault of mine," said he, passionately, as

soon as he had rallied from the momentary shock which this sudden announcement gave him, "if so much excellence is lost to the world."

It may be as well that the reader here be told, that both the parties to this interview had gone somewhat further than they intended; or, rather, that, under the sway of feelings, which had but a transient operation, they had gone further than subsequent cool reflection sanctioned. If the lady's conduct, or her language, was shaped at all in this instance by the motive which, as we have already endeavored to explain, influenced her before,—namely, that she felt his companionship well-nigh indispensable to the beguilement of her lonely hours,—it must have been in an exceedingly slight degree. The true explanation of such encouragement as she now gave Gatewood is to be found chiefly in the fact, that she chanced to be, at the time, in one of those despairing moods that occasionally came over her,—during which she abandoned all hope of ever again meeting with her lost lover, and was fain to act just as though she knew he was no longer in existence.

At such times, her reflections were much in this strain: "I can never love as I once did. But if I am to give my hand to any, why not to one who will do as much for my poor country as he has already done for me and mine? His present manner of life, to be sure, is of a questionable order. On his former life, for aught I yet know to the contrary, some stigma may rest; I have not yet heard his story—not even his own version of it. Nor need I seek to know it: it is enough to know that he loves me with such true devotion that I shall be able not only to win him from the wild life he now leads, but to influence him so to live in the future, as to atone for any stain that may have marked his past career, and to be once more the ornament to society, that, I doubt not, he was in the by-gone time."

It is, however, not at all improbable that there lurked in the woof of all this tangled web of ratiocination — though she may not have been conscious of it — the policy so strenuously inculcated upon her by her uncle and ghostly counsellor; — which was, to all intents and purposes, neither more nor less than the infamously notorious Jesuitical dogma, “The end justifies the means,” — the end being, in the present instance, the independence of Mexico. To this may as well be added an end incidental to the main one, — though this part of the programme had been sedulously kept out of the Señorita’s sight, — the investiture, namely, of the counsellor aforesaid, with the dignity of an archbishopric. This advice, I repeat, coming from the source it did, could not but have influenced the lady in some degree, however little she may have suspected it, or, if suspected, however loth she may have been to own it, even to herself. Nor is it to be denied that her holy kinsman’s promise of absolution, should she be conscience-smitten for having shaped her conduct by policy rather than by truthfulness and candor, may have had its weight in the matter.

No sooner had she lapsed, after their parting for the night, into her more common mood of thinking that her former lover still lived, and would, in due time, come, with the rest, to the rescue of her native land, than she sorely repented the extent to which her zeal had led her to commit herself to the Chief, — her regret for the hasty words going even to the length of weeping over them as faithless to her early plight. Inasmuch, however, as they had been spoken, she concluded her painful reverie by resolving not to recall them, but to let them stand just as they had been uttered, until ample time should have been allowed the really loved one to make his appearance upon the scene. To this determination she was the more easily reconciled from the fact that her promises to this last lover were only

conditional, and might be retracted without any great stretch of conscience, should the other event — which she, one day, joyfully anticipated, and perhaps the very next, hopelessly despaired of,—ever come about.

Gatewood, also, found, on mature reflection, that he had promised more than he intended when he said, without due qualification, that he would champion the Señorita's cause. The truth is, he had been so suddenly elevated by her last words, from the pit into which her first had sunk him, that, in the glow of reaction, he had closed a rash bargain. His only alternative, he thought, was to make better terms when the time should come—as come it must—that would enable him,—not to sue feebly for them, as heretofore,—but to demand them in the proud right of might.

CHAPTER XXII.

I must bring you to our captain's cave.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

These are my mates, that make their will their law,

Have some unhappy passenger in chase.

They love me well, yet I have much to do

To keep them from uncivil outrages.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

If he is not in love with some woman, there is no believing old signs.

Much Ado About Nothing.

HAVING brought matters thus far with the Señorita, Gatewood thought it high time to give the camp-people an inkling of what was in the wind, so that, when the time should arrive to make their actual arrangements for the campaign, which must now be soon, if at all, his band

should not be scandalized by dissensions, but that all who should prove irreconcilable to his sudden somersault, might leave the premises and bear with them all discordant elements.

All this he could now essay with the better grace, inasmuch as Magee had made good his promise, to influence the civil authorities to release the men whom he had arrested and turned over to their jurisdiction. These had reached camp several days before—Magee having taken precious good care to let it be known that their release had been effected through his instrumentality.

One morning Gatewood summoned Wynne to his tent—an event, indeed, not so very unusual as to excite suspicion that anything extraordinary was going on or in contemplation; for that veteran was well known to be the Captain's right-hand man in all cases where an officer's agency was not essential. After explaining to him his intentions, he desired him to make them known to all the men, in a gradual way, as though he had heard of them, not directly from his Chief, but by sheer accident. The exact mode of doing this, he did not prescribe, but left it entirely to the discretion of the veteran, on whose judgment, in such matters, he well knew, from past experience, he could implicitly rely.

His instructions were confined to the substance of what he wished his men to know. Wynne was to inform them fully about the peculiar beauties and the attractiveness of the province of Texas, of which the Chief himself had only heard, but of which Wynne knew more, probably, than any other American within the limits of Neutralia—he having traversed, in his younger days, nearly every portion of it, lassoed wild horses on the prairies, and sojourned, at various times, in the renowned city of San Antonio de Bexar. He was to tell them, too, of the rich

lands that were to fall to their share, should the expedition prove successful; the mines they would come into possession of; and any other advantages which he thought the conquest and occupation of the country would give them — for that the projected invasion would end in conquest and occupation by the Anglo-Saxon portion of the little army, Gatewood made no doubt.

Touching his real motive for reversing his determination, previously promulgated among them — not to have anything to do with an expedition which the hated Magee should command — of course, he did not divulge this, even to the faithful agent he had chosen to negotiate betwixt him and his men; though it is quite likely he thought that not only Wynne, but the other men as well, had already right suspicions concerning it. And here it is proper to remark, that, although the Chief, since he had come under the glamour of the Señorita's eyes, had absented himself from camp much more than formerly, yet when there, no one could perceive that he was in the least changed. All signs (which they would have deemed unmanly) of the deep passion that had taken such complete possession of his breast, however marked they might have been a few moments before, had always vanished when he came into their presence; and he seemed, to their critical eyes, the same ready, energetic, stern chieftain that he had ever heretofore proved himself. They were fain to believe that he was merely wantoning with this beautiful woman — the fame of her beauty had long since spread through the camp — and that the result could not but prove disastrous to her virtue.

Could they have once seen him sink — as they would have deemed it — the warrior in the humble suitor; could they have seen him unbend before her, — pay her respectful court, — hang on her words, — dim, or brighten, beneath her frown,

or smile,—they would doubtless have thought him so sadly lapsed from his proud estate as to be no longer a fit chief-tain of the fierce spirits who now gloried in owning his supremacy, and were ever ready to do his behests.

The reasons that he chose to assign for joining this expedition, which they all had so lately sworn, in their heart of hearts, to give the go-by, if no worse, may perhaps be best explained in his own words to Wynne.

“Tell them,” said he, “that, as Magee has done all he could do to atone for the outrage he committed, there is no further use for enmity,—especially, since the longer it is kept up, the more it will work against their own interests. He now proposes to make still further amends, by leading them on to the attainment of all they can desire. If they refuse, they thereby reject the only way he has to prove to them that he regrets what he has done. And that he does regret it—sincerely, too, I have every reason to think—I have had from his own lips. As for any vengeance they may cherish against him, now that he has returned within their reach, you can tell them that my word of honor, which I pledged him on condition that he would effect their release, shall forever be proof against *that*.”

“I’ll jist ride in to town,” thought Wynne, as he left Gatewood’s tent, “and when I come back, I’ll have lots o’ news to tell the boys; and I can bring in, ’long with the rest, what the Cap’n jist now told me.”

About sunset of the same day, Wynne returned from Natchitoches. When he neared camp, he had the good luck to find about twenty of the men assembled, watching the operation, which was being performed by two others, of roping a pair of stout cubs captured by them and just brought in, after being reduced to a state of orphanage,

and their happy homestead being otherwise desolated — all in that merciless fashion universal with frontiersmen.

Wynne was rejoiced that so good a chance presented to speed throughout the camp what news he had, without his appearing to be anxious that it should be made known. He had gathered enough real news to serve his purpose, without being driven to the questionable expedient of manufacturing the requisite quantity, or even of greatly coloring its texture — neither of which things he would, in all probability, have scrupled to do, had he thought his Chief's interests called for it.

As he now approached the group, there were peals of laughter going up from among them, at very short intervals, sometimes at the expense of the youthful captives — the Messrs. Bruin — though much oftener at the expense of the two men, who were vainly trying to lasso them, and were getting an occasional slap from a paw, which, though young, was by no means velvety, and which tore a hole in the garments, or the skin, of the captors, according to their nearness when the resenting blow was struck.

"There comes Wynne," said one of the group, who chanced to spy the veteran at a distance. This discovery closed the menagerie, so far as the audience was concerned, and secured the exhibitors from any further mortification of a laugh; for all the spectators, as they invariably did when they knew he had been to town, turned their attention exclusively to Wynne, who, previous to setting out in the morning, had taken especial care to let it be known whither he was going.

"What news, Wynne?" demanded the one who had first seen him, and who now took the lead, as they moved away a few steps to meet him.

"News?" he echoed, as he rode up amongst them. "Why, town's jist full o' news to-day — fuller 'n I ever knowed it."

"Well, give us a little."

"Thar's a young army jist got in from the States," he replied, dismounting, and proceeding, with great deliberation, to unsaddle his horse.

No one made any comment on this announcement — which, by the by, was no invention of Wynne's, but only the simple truth. It was, however, easy to see that all looked somewhat startled.

"You need n't, all o' you, be skeered to death: they ain't comin' after us Neutral-Grounders," resumed Wynne, reading, at once, the prevailing apprehension, that the United States government had sent a force, as it had done several times before, to expel them from their fastnesses.

"They 're after no sich small game as we folks."

"It's the force that's to invade Texas, then?" conjectured one, with the confident tone and air of having made a plausible guess.

"Yes."

Wynne said no more than the simple monosyllable, for the very good reason, that he wanted, first, to ascertain how these wild pulses beat with reference to such an expedition.

"I'm glad of that," said one. "I hope Gatewood will join 'em, and take us with him."

"So do I," said two or three others.

"I'm d—d if *I* do then — not if that d—d Magee's to command," said one of those whom that officer had caused to be whipped, and who had just been released from the civil clutches.

"I should reckon not," said another. "You 'll carry his mark to your grave, Hardy. I don't see how any of us can forget that matter — so soon, too! It might just as well ha' been me. If he 'd ha' caught *me*, he 'd ha' served me the same way — or *you* — or *you* — or *you*." As he said

this, he jerked his head excitedly in the direction of those immediately about him.

"Oh, nobody expects them to go that he treated *that* way," said the first speaker. "I'm sure *I* would n't, if he'd ha' whipped *me*. They can just stay here and suck their paws."

"I think they're the very ones that ought to go," said a great, ferocious-looking fellow, who had not before spoken. "I'm one o' them that he whipped—and all hell would n't stop me from goin'."

"Why, Crabtree," exclaimed, in a very excited tone and manner, the one who had shared with him the scorching and flagellation, "if you do, we'll brand you as a d—d traitor. You swore vengeance against Magee oftener'n all the rest of us put together. You said, if you ever got a chance —"

"And it's just to git a chance that I'm goin'," interrupted the other. "If I don't put a ball through him before the campaign's half over, it'll be because I'll have a chance to do still better."

"What's that?"

"Split his d—d weasand on the sly. And that I'll do — so help me God! So, you may put me down for *that* expedition, shore."

The speaker said no more. One might well think he had said enough; but I should rather he had uttered a dozen such things of me, than have laughed at me that deadly laugh. It seemed like a continuation of his vengeful threat — nay, it seemed like the veritable execution of it — causing a shudder to come over more than one of those who knew Crabtree well.

"What are *you* going to do, Wynne?" asked one of those who had expressed themselves in favor of co-operating, in good faith, with the proposed movement. For

when anything novel or exciting was on foot, these wild fellows always wanted to know what "the old boy," as they sometimes called Wynne, was going to do—their course in the matter being mostly shaped by his.

Wynne, during the whole of this running conversation, had assumed an air of the most supreme indifference, and, without appearing to listen to anything that was said, had heard every word. Thinking he had, by this time, caught, with tolerable accuracy, the key-note of the crowd around him, and that they were quite a fair specimen of Gatewood's entire band, he resolved that this was a good time for him to speak in the interest of the Captain. So, without directly answering the query propounded to him, as to what his own individual course would be, he went on to give more of the news he had heard, together with his own views of the matter under consideration,—well aware that his opinion and the course he should adopt, would have no little weight in determining others.

"They say in town, we're all expected to jine when the time comes to move. And, then, there's a rumor that the Cap'n's been spoke to about it, and said, as Texas is goin' to be run over anyhow by them folks from the States, he did n't see why *his* boys should n't have a hand in it and git their share o' the spiles, 'long with the rest. It's my private opinion we ought to jine. Boys, I've been all through Texas—and that's more'n any of you can say—and I jist tell you, God A'mighty never made sich another country."

He then went on to depict Texas, in his rough way, as an earthly Elysium. He represented the rolling prairies as always covered with flowers, and as there was plenty of timber along the water-courses, bees and honey were abundant; the streams as well filled with the finest fish, and never getting muddy, since the rain ran altogether

through grass and flowers to reach them; all kinds of game as abounding, from the stately buffalo and wild horse down, through a hundred intermediate sorts — many of which he specified — to the insignificant grouse and hare, which, he said, you might knock over either with a stick or a d—d shot-gun, whichever you chose — but, of the two, for his part, he should always prefer the stick. Then there was no end of the mines of gold and silver in the mountains; and all to be done, to get their treasures, was to drive out the d—d Indians. He wound up his description by depicting the women of San Antonio as something marvellous in the way of charms, and as being particularly partial to men of American blood.

To such as have visited Texas, this rude outlaw's picture will hardly seem overdrawn.

"Now, boys," Wynne went on, "the question is just narrowed down to this: Shall we stay here in this d—d Neutral Ground, whar we can't see ten foot ahead of us — and then none the puttiest sights nuther — or go to lord it over sich as I have described? Here we've been squatted down in this miser'ble thicket, this ever so many years, ketchin' sich little dribbles as a counterband trade mought happen to bring from Texas,—and now when thar's a clean chance to git the whole thing, Texas and all, some o' you want to hold back, and look on, and growl, while them other fellows'll take every d—d bit of it — trade and all."

With these indignant words, Wynne, without more ado, walked off to his tent and left the group — still divided in their opinions — to discuss the subject among themselves as long as they might choose.

"I b'lieve that Spanish girl's at the bottom o' this whole d—d business," said one of that portion among them who were not very clear, in their perverted consciences, about the propriety of so readily forgiving Magee.

"How do you mean?" asked another.

"Why, I mean, she's got the Captain so bad, that she can do pretty much as she pleases with him—and, so she's made him do this—don't you see?"

"Pooh! I'd just like to see the woman that could do anything with *him* when he's once made up his mind."

"I should ha' thought so, too, if I had n't come on 'em once, unbeknowns. I tell you he wa'n't the same Gatewood then as he is here among us—not by a long one. I was in puppy-love with a girl myself oncet, but I wa'n't quite as big a pup as you'd ha' thought him, if you'd only seen him watchin' her, and not darin' to put his hand on her. They did n't see me; so I stood and looked at 'em a right smart while, and then left—my mind made up that Cap'n Gatewood was done for. That's the secret, you may depend, and he'll marry her too—that's, if he can git her—which I'm in doubts about."

"*She git him*, you mean, more like," remarked another.

"Well," said one who had not yet spoken, "what does it matter if she *does* get him, so we get Texas? I, for one, would be willing for such a swop; 'specially, if there's a few more such pretty women there as she is."

With a few closing remarks, which seemed to taper off the debate, they gradually dispersed to their respective quarters, to digest these tidings, of so much moment to all Neutralians.

It was, however, very evident that Wynne had brought the most of them into such a plastic state, that, by means of one or two more little speeches, he would be able to knead them as so much dough, and to leaven, into the bargain, the whole lump to the Captain's taste.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Talk not to me: my mind is heavy.—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

My counsel
Must be even as swiftly follow'd as
I mean to utter it, or both yourself and we
Cry, *lost*, and so good-night. *Winter's Tale.*

For necessity of present life,
I must show out a flag and sign of love,
Which is indeed but sign. *Othello.*

WHEN the Padre returned from Natchitoches that evening — which he did about sunset — he searched in vain for his niece, in the house, and under the trees where he usually found her. At length, descrying her sitting on the shore of the lake, looking out on the beautiful expanse of water, which a light breeze was crisping into wavelets and sending them to ripple softly along the smooth, glistening beach at her feet, he hurried down the slope to where she sat.

The Señorita had felt more than usually lonely this evening. She had been thinking of the time — now probably near at hand — when she would be left, for months, with no company except the old Mexican couple. How, without books, and confined within very narrow limits by the fear of venturing into the forest, could she possibly manage to while away so many idle hours?

“I shall have nothing to do,” she said aloud, “but to eat and sleep, like the wild animals around me. I shall be almost like one in solitary confinement in some prison-house.”

Prison-house, indeed! How could she call *this* a prison-house, when she recollected one to which this were an

Eden? What a sad echo that one little gloomy word awakened in her breast! Not such an echo as was ever around her here,—leaping forth like the wild deer, far along the green vistas of forest growth, till every trace died away in the free and still open distance. Ah! no—but the dreary, dismal echo that quickens in the dungeon's womb, and is stifled there, even while yet struggling to make its way into the outer world.

It awakened thoughts of Queretaro—and such thoughts could not but be sad. It recalled all the sufferings of her lover, together with the perils she had voluntarily encountered, and the sacrifices she had made, in his behalf. Oh, what would she not give for an opportunity to brave the same perils, and make the same sacrifices, or even greater, to serve him now! What would she not give to know merely that he still lived, even though they should never—never meet again! She felt that it would be somewhat comforting to know that he was in the same world with her, and not have to think him in that other unknown world, which must remain ever dark and forbidding until our time shall come to explore it in the disembodied spirit. “It would be something,” she thought, “to know that we breathe the same air,—wear the same flesh, frail though it be,—that we look out on the same sun, and moon, and starry skies,—and, above all, that he sometimes thinks of me, wherever he is.”

“And what of this other one—this ardent suitor? who, I verily believe, loves me as his life. I cannot love him in turn. And yet, if *he*, my long lost lover, comes not soon, I shall be fain to take the irrevocable step for my country's sake.”

The Señorita was relieved from the agony, now coming upon her,—of contemplating, in detail, a loveless wedded life,—by her uncle's approach.

"Isabella," said he, as he seated himself by her side, "you look very lonely here."

"Lonely as I am, uncle," she replied, with a very dejected air, that could not have failed to move a more stoical heart than his, "I fear I shall be much more so when you all leave."

"Tut! girl," he said, with affected indifference, "you must not give way thus. You must be more of a heroine than that. Surely, for freedom's sake, if for no other, you can bear it a little while."

"Well, I suppose I can," she replied, looking a trifle ashamed of her weakness. "At least I will try."

"But that will not do: you *must* bear it."

"Well then, I will," she said, resolutely. "And I am sorry that I betrayed any such unworthy shrinking from duty. Believe me, there shall be no more of it. What news do you bring, this evening?"

"A great deal. Magee has reached Natchitoches with a hundred and fifty men."

"A hundred and fifty men, indeed! A mere handful! Is that all he could get? I hope we shall have more than that, uncle."

"I am sorry to say, there is very little prospect of many now. He could have got all we want: in fact, several other companies were ready to start, but news came, just then, that there was every probability of a war between the United States and England. Indeed, I believe, no one doubts that hostilities will soon commence. Many, therefore, changed their minds, and resolved to remain to fight for their own country."

"They surely cannot be blamed for that," said the Señora. "Still it grieves me that it is so. Have you any tidings of Bernardo and Juan?"

"Yes — through Magee. He left them in New Orleans.

They will be on in a few days — having stopped there only long enough to make certain purchases for the campaign. Perhaps the worst of the news is, that both the President of the United States and the Governor of Louisiana, in view of the war impending with Great Britain, have resolved to adopt prompt and vigorous measures to stop our operations on this frontier.”

“That would, indeed, be unfortunate,” said Isabella. “But I suppose it is reasonable they should want these men for their own defence. Uncle, do you really think there will be only a hundred and fifty men from the States?”

“There are about fifty more,” replied the priest, “who have engaged positively to come on in a few days. Two hundred will, I am confident, embrace all we can hope for from that source. So, you see, Isabella, how much depends on you.”

This was the first time the Padre had made any allusion whatever, directly or indirectly, to her peculiar relations to Gatewood, since she had told him her sad story, and he had volunteered his advice on the subject. During the interval, however, he had been, without appearing to be so, closely and anxiously observant of their intercourse with each other, and, as the result of his surveillance, had the very best grounds for supposing that matters were going forward to his entire satisfaction. Hence, his silence on the subject, until now, when it admitted of no further delay.

In answer to his remark, the Señorita did not say a word, but instantly withdrew her eyes from his and directed them upon the sands at her feet.

“The good of the cause, Isabella,” he resumed, seeing that she was not likely to speak, “demands that I should know what you have really been able to effect in enlisting in our behalf the brave Chief of the Neutral Ground.”

She suddenly fixed on him her glorious eyes, slightly flashing with indignation. A sense of shame, or it may have been humiliation, flushed her cheek, while her beautiful lip — as if to give the lie to the shameful glow that mantled above — curled proudly as she replied :

“Uncle, that is a painful subject to me — exceedingly so. I had hoped that the first time you ever introduced it would also have been the last.”

Saying this, she rose abruptly and was about turning to the house. But the Padre had yet more to say to her, and he was a man not easily balked of his purpose.

“As you please, Isabella,” he remarked calmly. “But this much I have to add, be your pain, or mine, ever so great — that, whatever is to be done here for the cause, must be done forthwith, or may as well be abandoned altogether. If Gatewood shall not join his force with Magee’s within a very short time, our hopes on this frontier are ruined. The only plan that Magee can possibly adopt to clear himself of the United States territory and of liability to arrest, is, to enter Texas at once. This he cannot do with the few men he has, without risk of being cut off by the Gachupins before others can join him. If he does not enter that province within a few days — a fortnight, at most — the Governor of Louisiana has declared that the men shall be dispersed and the expedition broken up.

“But here is something more tangible,” he continued, drawing from his pocket a folded paper. “It may aid in determining your future course in this matter. This list comprises the name of every American whatsoever who has enlisted or promised to enlist under our banner. I have further only to observe, what you will readily find out by inspection — that the name of your lover is not of them.”

Now, during this conversation, the Señorita had longed

—not once only, but over and over again—to know whether or not her lover had come on with this little army. In fact, it was her very first thought on hearing the news of their arrival. It had then occurred to her to ask her uncle about it, but this, for two reasons, she decided not to do: First, because he had before endeavored—somewhat cruelly, she thought—to crush out what little hope she herself was striving with all her might to keep alive, as the one fond hope of her existence, and therefore she did not care to renew, now, the unpleasant theme; and, secondly, because she judged that he had most probably heard nothing bearing upon the matter, and, even if he had, that he would be very apt to volunteer the telling of it before the colloquy should close. Then, almost immediately, there rose in her mind a doubt, whether her uncle—although prompt enough, she well knew, to impart unfavorable tidings on that subject—would not be far more likely to suppress than communicate the fact of her lover's arrival, should he have heard of it. Still she shrank from propounding the question directly, and at the moment when he produced the list from his pocket, she had determined upon the plan of dispatching Miguel to town, betimes, on the morrow, that he might make an effort to get the information she so much desired.

All necessity for this, however, was done away with by the Padre's last act of handing her the paper, and by the accompanying dreadful words, "*His name is not of them.*"

Not wishing—despite her indignation—to be guilty of the gross rudeness of leaving her uncle while he was yet talking to her, Isabella had paused to hear him to the end. When he had finished, she said nothing in reply; but as she put out her hand and took the proffered list, it trembled perceptibly in her grasp; and as she turned to the house, a cold shudder ran through her frame. It seemed to her

that, at that moment, her one last and only hope took wing and left her, so far as love was concerned, in all the blackness of despair.

Gatewood, having waited long enough to make sure that the Padre had detailed to his niece all the late momentous news, (regarding which he also had, of course, kept himself duly posted,) and that the two had exchanged such views on the subject as they well might prefer to do during his absence, resumed his visits. If he had before entertained moderate hopes of winning the Señorita's hand on the ground of policy, he must have felt quite well assured of it now, when it had become plain that policy absolutely demanded her assent, the only alternative being the utter breaking down of the patriot cause in this quarter. The effect of the threatened war in the United States, in limiting the volunteers to the pitiful number of two hundred, when at least a thousand were looked for, rendered indispensable his assistance, which had, a few months before, under better auspices, been regarded not by any means essential, but only highly desirable in order to secure the success of the projected movement beyond all manner of doubt, and with as little loss of life as possible. He was resolved, however, if it could be done, to win her pledge of marriage, without any allusion to his services, either past or to come. It must be, he thought, already but too evident to her proud spirit, whenever she was led to dwell on the painful theme, that she was simply selling herself for a price — to benefit her country, to be sure, but it was none the less, for that, a sale. So, the less said about it the better.

It was with no slight degree of satisfaction, that, on the occasion of renewing his intercourse with the lady, after an absence of several days, he was able to discover in her

manner towards him certain little signs, which bespoke his final triumph ; and it was still more gratifying to him to find that these trivial indications increased every day as the time drew near when they were to part. Before, she would only sit with him beneath the trees, or, at most, stroll within full sight of the house, where they were liable to be seen and heard at almost any moment by the two Mexican servants. Now, however, she acceded to his request to walk with him into the surrounding woods. At first, these walks were very limited ; but they were gradually extended, until at length the wanderers began to gather flowers wherever these could be found, without much note of either bearing or distance. At other times, they would ensconce themselves within some arbor which nature had fantastically fashioned out of her wild vines and creepers,—and on which the eye of mortal had probably never before rested,—where they would converse about that world from whose communion an untoward destiny had so effectually shut them out. By way of varying all this ere it should cloy, they sometimes took long rides together on horseback,—now along the main road,—now up and down the wild bridle-paths, where they often met some of those grim denizens of Neutralia whom it had become her main object to win, through their Chief, for the maintenance of the cause she had espoused.

At length, one day, he prevailed on her to go with him on the lake. This became henceforward their favorite diversion,—the rides and strolls by land being now seldom resorted to,—for the water has charms above everything else, as all who have tried it must know. The little boat was a beautiful one, and Gatewood managed it most deftly. Sometimes the Señorita would go with him when he went to catch a mess of fish—as he did nearly every day. At other times they would visit the cluster of little wooded

islands which lay out a cable's length or so from the shore, and gliding leisurely from one to the other, tarry a few moments under the shadow of each, to inspect and admire its peculiar beauties, then skim away to some distant point of land whose attractions chanced to strike their fancy. Thence coasting slowly along, they would comment in detail on the lovely surroundings — the blending beauties of the wood and water below, and the sky, with its ever-shifting clouds, above them.

Fitting scenes these, the reader may think, to inspire with love, and tempting environments amid which to make it known,—yet not one word of love had thus far been spoken.

At last, however, while gliding, on one occasion, thus listlessly along, following the fantastic indentations of the leafy fringe that encircled the lake, Gatewood suddenly directed the boat shoreward, adjusted the oars in the bottom, and, pushing aside the drooping boughs of the cypress-trees that dipped gracefully in the water, the dainty little craft, under the impulse she had received, was beached on the golden sands.

Whether the Chief did this deliberately, with an eye to what was so soon to follow, I know not. Be that as it may, however, thus much is certain: scarcely had the keel scraped upon the sands, when he took her hand in his — gently—ever so gently—as though giving her time to consider whether she would allow him such a priceless privilege. And during that brief interval, she *did* consider: asking herself, “If I am to marry this man, in heaven’s name, why should I shrink from his touch?” The consequence was, the hand was not withdrawn—but her eyes were cast down—her cheek owned the contact with a faint blush—her breathing was slightly quickened.

Where passion was concerned, Gatewood was not the

man to do things by halves; so that, scarcely a moment more had passed, before she was folded in his embrace,—lying pliant enough against his broad breast, that throbbed wildly now—almost madly, indeed—while, as may well be imagined, his eager lips were not idle with such a delicious treat before them. He at last held in his arms the woman whom he had held so long in his heart.

Before they left that spot the Señorita had pledged herself to marry him, at San Antonio, as soon as Texas, her native province, should be free by his aid.

Ah, how blind we are, at times, to all the eloquent emblems which kind Nature spreads out so profusely about us, that we may read in them our fate, if we only *will*! These two saw not that heaven's smile upon their plight was quite shut out by the gloomy canopy of cypress above their devoted heads.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Now will I lead you to the house, and show you
The lass I spoke of. *All's Well That Ends Well.*

What should it be that he respects in her
But I can make respective in myself,
If this fond love were not a blinded god?

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

Claudio.—Nay, but I know one who loves him.

Don Pedro.—I warrant, one that knows him not.

Claudio.—Yes, and his ill conditions, and in despite of all, dies
for him.

Don Pedro.—She shall be buried with her face upwards.

Much Ado About Nothing.

Show the inside of your purse to the outside of his hand, and so no
more ado. *Winter's Tale.*

GATEWOOD having now fully decided to join Magee with all his available force — only about a half-dozen, in the end, refusing to serve, on any condition whatsoever, under a commander who had once put them to the torture — sought out that officer in order to learn his plan of the campaign.

On consultation, it was decided that, as Gatewood was ready to start, he should cross the Sabine without delay, and, pushing on to Nacogdoches, take that place at once — there being great danger that, unless they were thus prompt and energetic, the Spanish garrison there might hear of the contemplated movement, and fortify the town to such an extent that many lives would have to be sacrificed in its capture.

The evening before the Neutralians broke camp, Davies — the man whose wife, it will be recollected, waited on Filly at Camp Wildwood — paid his aged mother a fare-

well visit before departing on the campaign. He spent the night at the old lady's house, leaving, however, early the next morning — so that the girl did not see him, except for a few moments.

"Filly," said Mrs. Davies, as the girl, with a countenance which was now habitually sad, entered the little room where the ancient dame was spinning, "as you and Captain Gatewood were always great friends, I'll tell you some news that Will gave me about him."

"Oh, don't tell me, Mrs. Davies — please! I know what it is: it's something about that horrid war." And two big tears stood in the poor girl's eyes.

"Oh, no, it is n't, honey; it's good news — it'll cheer you up," said the old lady, smiling.

"What is it, then? Good news is so scarce nowadays."

"The Captain's going to marry the rich and beautiful Señorita that lives in his house by the lake."

Now, Mrs. Davies had never once thought of such a thing as Filly's being in love with Gatewood. In truth, she had always supposed they stood much in the same relation to each other as father and daughter — though she well knew that they were *not* father and daughter. Great was her astonishment, therefore, when the girl, on hearing this announcement, gave vent to a flood of tears and rushed away to her room. Even with this impulsive burst of feeling to assist in the discovery of the tender secret that lay like a hidden jewel at the maiden's heart, the old lady still failed even so much as to suspect such a state of affairs — attributing the girl's emotion to a sudden fear on her part, that, if her protector should indeed marry, he would have no more favors and caresses to lavish on his little pet: another would get them all.

Mrs. Davies, being a kind-hearted woman, was much moved by the girl's exhibition of grief, and in a few min-

utes followed her to her room, with the hope of contributing in some way to her relief.

“Don’t take on so, Filly,” she said, softly, as she entered and found her lying prone on the bed. “I’m sure I did n’t mean to make you cry: there’s no need of all these tears, if you’ll only look at the thing in the right way. Why, Filly, I’ve no doubt Captain Gatewood would like to have you live with them in the Señorita’s fine house in San Antonio; and I’m sure, too, he’ll treat you as he has always done. And they say she is a splendid lady, and there’s not a bit of doubt but she’d like to have your company when the Captain’s away from home — and while he’s there, too, for that matter. Now, child — ”

“Oh, Mrs. Davies, do please let me be, and leave me to myself!” exclaimed the girl, breaking out into a fresh torrent of tears, and burying her face deep in the pillow, wholly overcome by agony, as each of these words, intended in all kindness, pierced her very heart like a dagger. “Oh, please, don’t say any more about it! I want to go to sleep — if you’ll only let me.”

Mrs. Davies was not slow to adopt the only alternative left her. She stole from the apartment, closing the door as gently behind her as though already afraid of disturbing the girl’s slumbers.

Ah, it was many a long and weary hour before sleep came to relieve those aching eyeballs and soothe that throbbing heart!

The first thing Filly thought of, on awaking, was a certain resolution she had formed after Mrs. Davies left her, and which, now, on conning it over a second time, she determined to carry out without delay — since, if postponed, it might be too late.

Before getting to sleep she had gone over, mentally, her

last interview with Gatewood. This she could the more easily do, as she had recalled it a full hundred times since. The latter part of it, indeed,—in which he gave her to understand that he would marry her on his return,—had been almost constantly on her mind since she came to the town: had been, in fact, the one sole thing that made her separation from him at all endurable.

Filly's beauty had been much admired by the youth of the town, as well as by the younger officers of the garrison; and she would doubtless have been quite a belle, had her ambition run in that very questionable line. So far, however, from going into society, or mixing at all with the gay little parties of the place, she mostly confined herself to Mrs. Davies's contracted premises, and preferred to remain unseen by her admirers, except such transient glimpses as they could catch of her when they chanced to meet her tripping gracefully along the street, or a little distance into the country, on her daily walk of mere recreation. When any one called at the old lady's, Filly kept close to her own room, where she spent her time partly in reading such newspapers or books as she could get access to through Mrs. Davies's intercourse with the citizens, but chiefly in musing of Gatewood, and in speculating what their future life would be when he should return—if, indeed, he should ever return—from this miserable war. The possibility of his being killed hung like a shadow over her and kept her spirits constantly at a low ebb. Hence, she invariably sent her "excuses" to such of her hostess's visitors of both sexes as expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of the young forest beauty.

Leading the secluded life she now did, she might almost as well have remained in the woods, so far as regards any knowledge she gained here of the world and its ways. Lest the assertion that she was happy, under these trying

circumstances, should seem rather incredible, I shall only venture to say that she was at least contented. But the preservation of her feelings even in this comparatively negative state of happiness was wholly dependent on *hope*. When that key-stone was struck from the rainbow arch which her busy fancy had been so long building up, and which love had so fondly tinted with his own peculiar hues, the whole illusive fabric fell and vanished at once from view, leaving her only the menacing cloud against which it had been so beautifully but treacherously set.

The hopeful promise which Gatewood had made to her at that last meeting,—"When I come back I will make you happy,"—had been ever in her thoughts. Her impulsive tongue often repeated it in the solitude of her chamber, and her innermost heart-cell echoed back, each time, its glad music. But these fond words now suddenly gave place to those later ones, which, though far too dreadful for her tongue to utter, constantly rang through her heart, not in music's tones, indeed, but like voices in a vault,—“When he comes back he will marry another.”

On second thought, she could not quite believe the disastrous news—though that there was far too much foundation for it, she did not doubt. Her only remaining hope was the seemingly forlorn one of proving it false—and to prove it so, she resolved to spare no effort.

“I will go to the lady herself,” she thought; “and if I can find out in no other way, I will just ask her downright whether this is so. If she will not tell me, why, then, I’ll demand it as the right of one he had long ago promised to make his wife. *That*, I rather think, will bring the proud lady down: *that* will shame her: *that* will bring her to terms—if anything will. They say she’s so grand, and rich, and all that—and I’ve no doubt they might call her stuck up, too, without straying very far from the truth.

But I'm not at all afraid of her great ladyship; and if I don't humble her it will be strange, indeed. To be sure, I shouldn't like to undertake such a thing, here in town, where people have grades to society, just as they have stories to their houses, and steps to go up—queer ones, too, sometimes, it seems to me. But out in the wild woods yonder, where all are on the tent-floor level, with no upper story to mount to, I'm not a bit afraid she'll get the better of me—with such a good cause as I have, too.

“Let me see: how shall I go about it? Let Mrs. Davies know where I'm going? No, indeed! that would never do. I'll just slip off from her: I needn't be gone long: I think it's only about fifteen miles. I can walk there to-day, if I take the whole day for it—stay all night—and then come back to-morrow. I reckon the great lady's hardly so proud she won't let me stay all night in her house. *Her* house, indeed! It's *my* house: it was built and furnished on purpose for me. Yes—she's living in my house, and I'm going to tell her so, too. I wonder how her ladyship, with all her money, and finery, and jewels, and all, will like to hear *that* piece of news? for I've no doubt it will be news to her. *He* never told her that—never in the world, for all the long rambles and talks they must have had together around that beautiful lake. Oh, I do wish he *had* told her!”

This musing over what was now, and its contrast with what might have been, brought the poor girl back again to her tears. She soon rallied, however; and, long before the middle of the day, was off on her venturesome journey. Taking the main road leading directly west, she got along very well the first two or three miles. Her life, as far back as she could remember, had been so wild, and not seldom beset with perils, that she now took but little forethought of any dangers she might encounter,—though,

once fairly on her way, she found herself wishing, with all her heart, for Grim — as much perhaps for his agreeable company's sake as for his protectorship. She had been so long accustomed, while in the woods, to the society of this faithful friend, that now, when she had again entered them, she could not but think his absence from her side quite unnatural, to say the least.

She had gone probably not more than fourth the distance, when she began to grow quite weary. She now reflected, for the first time, as she sat down on a log by the roadside to rest, that her comparatively inactive life in the town, for several months, had unfitted her for undergoing the great amount of exertion to which she had inured herself when in camp, by long and frequent strolls through the forest. After she had jogged along about a mile further, she began to despair of carrying out her project, and was beginning to think seriously of returning. Of course, she did not know exactly how far she had already come, but, like all persons who have lived much in the woods, she had a tolerably correct idea of both time and distance. As she sat on her second resting-log, she reasoned within herself somewhat after this fashion:

“I'm now about one-third the way to the lake. It will be impossible to make the other ten miles — at least without a night's rest. But there's no house on the way, and if I attempt to spend the night in the woods, a pack of wolves may make their supper on me. No — it's very plain I shall have to return to town. It's not more than about five miles. I'll manage to get to the lake some other time, and some better way.”

She accordingly started on her way back. She had gone only some two or three hundred steps, however, when she met — mounted, each, on a mule — two Mexicans, one of them a very old man, the other, to judge from a strong resemblance in feature, most probably his son.

Filly, though she had by no means a thorough knowledge of Spanish, could speak it well enough, she thought, to converse with these men — by the aid of a few natural signs — to the limited extent of her present necessities.

"Will you take me, behind you, to the by-path that leads to the lake?" she asked of the old man. In order to supply her linguistic deficiencies — of which she was fully aware — she pointed, as she said this, first, to herself, then to the croup of the old man's mule, and lastly in the direction she wished to go.

Both the men had reined in as soon as she began to speak.

"No, *Señorita*," replied the old man, with surly tone and manner, and from the expression of his face, not a little astonished withal that a young girl should be found in such a wild, out-of-the-way place without a protector.

"But I *must* go," insisted Filly. "I undertook to walk from Natchitoches to the lake, but found I couldn't get all the way to-night,—and so, I just now turned back.

"I *must* go," she repeated, when she saw no sign of the Mexican yielding.

"No, *Señorita*," said the man again, at the same time digging his ponderous spurs into the mule's sides and spurring off in a jog-trot — his companion following.

It is quite likely the man did not comprehend a word our heroine said — beyond the first request for transportation. But even had he comprehended her throughout, the result would no doubt have been the same. It was enough for this grizzled brute to know that she wanted to ride behind him,—an arrangement which he thought could benefit no one but herself,—and thus knowing and thinking, he spurred off in order to get at once beyond the reach of her importunities. It soon became evident, however,

that somebody had blundered — the girl's chance for a ride was, after all, by no means so desperate as he would have her think, for she had in her possession a talisman of which he little dreamed.

"I'll give you this, if you'll only take me," she cried, trotting up alongside the mule, despite her weariness, and holding aloft — by its extreme outer edge, between her forefinger and thumb, so as to display it to the greatest advantage — a new, glittering silver dollar, which she had that moment drawn from her pocket.

Gatewood, on parting with her, had given her more money than she well knew what to do with, and she usually kept a few loose dollars about her person, — more because they were his gift, than for any use she thought they might ever be to her.

That was the spell required! That little silver rim formed the magic circle beyond which the sordid Mexican found himself utterly powerless to move. There was an instant truce to spurs. The slackened rein was tightened, with a sudden snap against the animal's neck, and was then so lustily drawn on, that its integrity was for a while seriously endangered.

The Mexican — become now all politeness — drew his blanket from under him and spread it out behind the saddle, and the girl, having transferred the glittering coin to his horny hand, was, with a little assistance from him, soon in the seat prepared for her accommodation — and they started off.

"Magic dollar!" thought Filly, "that can so soon humanize a heartless brute."

Such unflattering thoughts, however, she of course kept to herself.

The sun was yet several hours high when they reached the path which diverged to the lake. Filly dismounted,

and lost no time in making her way thitherward through the woods by the same route along which she had once before travelled so happily with Gatewood. And now, when she had come almost within sight of the spot she had so eagerly sought, her heart began to fail her. It may have been that the excessive fatigue she had undergone had somewhat unnerved her, — or it may have been on the principle, that what often seems to us quite insignificant at a good, safe distance, grows to be decidedly formidable as the critical spot or the critical period is approached. As an apt illustration of this — so far, at least, as a revulsion of our mere physical feeling is concerned — a visit to the dentist may occur to some of my odontalgic readers.

“I can’t go right up to the lady,” she began to think, “and ask her at once about this thing — as I thought I could. Why, it would be real rude. Besides, they say she’s such a nice person, and I don’t want to hurt any nice person’s feelings — nice persons are scarce. Then, she knows nothing at all about what Señor promised me. How should she know it? Of course he would n’t tell her. I dare say the lady never heard of poor little me. How, then, is she to blame, I’d just like to know? Not at all, that I can see. Strange, this did n’t occur to me before. What in the name of sense could I have been thinking about all this time? Here I’ve come this whole distance — stole off from Mrs. Davies, too — and after all, don’t know what to do. But I must do something: I’m nearly there now. I’ll sit down on this log and think about it.”

With this, she seated herself.

“Oh yes, I know what to do now,” she said aloud, after a little while. “I’ll tell the lady I started from Natchitoches, with some other persons, to go over to Nacogdoches. To be sure, that’s not quite true; but if I were to tell her I started out on such a trip *by myself*, she would hardly be-

lieve me: why, I reckon it's a hundred miles to Nacogdoches — on foot, too. And if I tell her I started to come to the lake, I should have to tell her the whole story as it really is; for, except that, what business have *I* got coming to the lake at all? Well, then, I'll tell her I started for Nacogdoches, and got separated from the rest of the party. And didn't I? I'm sure I got separated from those mean, good-for-nothing Mexicans — and was glad enough of it, too — for they're nasty folks: but that don't make it any the less true. Well, then, I got separated from them, just where the path leading to the lake leaves the great road; and, having heard there was a house at the lake — and I'm sure I've heard *that* many a time — I made my way — ”

CHAPTER XXV.

The fated beasts of nature's lower strain

Have each their separate task. *Old Play.*

Do not you fear:

I will stand 'twixt you and danger. — *Winter's Tale.*

FILLY left the sentence unfinished, as well she might: for she had caught what was, in a wood like that, and to an unprotected girl, a truly ominous sound. It came from the direction in which she herself had just come. It was like the rushing of some huge beast, or beasts, through the dense undergrowth. She could distinctly hear the heavy feet come down against the ground at every leap: could hear the noise of the dry leaves below, and the quick rustle of the green branches suddenly pushed aside, above and around — sounds, all of which, as they increased in

loudness at each repetition of them, told her practised ear that some ferocious beast, or perhaps a whole herd of hungry wolves, were on her track.

Whatever it might be, it was not yet in sight, for she cast a hurried look in that direction and saw nothing; yet she could hear it more plainly than before, bursting through the thicket near at hand. For once, she was frightened almost to death. What would she not have given, at that moment, if the faithful Grim could but have been with her, to interpose his terrible, burly front betwixt her and this sudden peril.

She knew it was useless to run. She thought of climbing a tree; but, looking quickly around, saw none she could hope to climb, even had the tremor of her limbs admitted of a feat to which they were wholly unaccustomed. She did not faint: most probably was not one of the fainting kind; for had she been, here was surely sufficient cause for it. She had never seen any one go off in that interesting way. In fact, all she knew about the swooning process she had learned from novels, and in these the cause assigned was usually so wholly inadequate to produce what she supposed was a sort of temporary death, that the entire thing, from beginning to end, remained a mystery to her. She only wished she *could* faint—and so be snatched, by this transient suspension of life, from witnessing, or, rather, *feeling*, the horrible tragedy now so plainly imminent: and, if it *must* be enacted—let her wake no more. The poor girl, incredible as it may seem, actually made a sort of effort at a swoon; but was by no means so successful as some of those daughters of luxury and fashion who know, to a hair, how to do the thing, no less than *when*. The consequence was, she held on to her senses and was vividly conscious, to the last, of everything going on around her.

Casting one more look in the direction of the danger, she caught a partial glimpse of the side of a great black beast, rushing athwart an opening in the thicket.

"It's a bear!" she exclaimed. "Oh! to be eaten up by a bear!" and sinking to the ground, she buried her face in her hands and in the dead leaves, and awaited her dreadful doom.

From this time, she saw nothing, for she did not once look up. She, however, heard every bound the animal made in its swift career. Nearer—nearer—nearer it came. That last leap could be only a few feet from her: yet so quick is thought under such appalling circumstances, she had time to think that, at the next instant, she would feel its merciless fangs crunching through her frame. Much to her astonishment, however, and no less to her temporary relief, she felt, instead, only a warm breath panted forth into her face. That it could not be wolves, she had already decided, from the entire absence of the hideous noises always made by those cowardly animals when they draw very near their prey.

The ferocious beast—now snuffing around her, as a preliminary to gorging himself on her dainty limbs, as a child retains, for a little while, a tidbit for its very deliciousness—could, she thought, be no other than a remorseless bear. She came to this conclusion from the fact of having often read of this animal—when not urged on by keen hunger to destroy his prey instantly—being sometimes induced to forego his destructive instinct by the feigning of death on the part of his intended victim, which mistaking for real death, he would be content to pass on his way with bloodless tooth and claw. And now, as she recalled this stratagem, she concluded to adopt it herself, as her only remaining hope, desperate though it seemed. Once resolved on this plan, it may readily be believed that she exerted

herself to don the disguise of the King of Terrors, just in the proportion in which she dreaded the real king himself. Indeed, she did this so royally well—lay so very still, and breathed so very little, and so softly—slowly—gently—when she breathed at all, that scarcely could old Æsculapius himself—without placing his finger on her pulse—have pronounced whether or not the vital spark had still its home in the beautiful flesh before him. Much less, therefore, could Bruin; for, although he might have quite as much brain and quite as refined manners as some of the lineal descendants of the venerable old demi-god, he could not be supposed to possess enough of the *tactus eruditus* to detect an arterial pulsation.

She lay in this dreadful way—oh! it seemed to her for hours, though it was probably only for minutes. At any rate, she lay so long that she thought she must soon die outright of the terrible suspense, if something could not be done. But, then, in the name of heaven, what *could* be done? Why did the pitiless brute gloat so long in fond anticipation over the precious morsels he was to tear from her slender bones? Why did he not leave her, or—eat her up at once and have done with it? Could it be possible that, not being very hungry just now, he was waiting there for the return of his voracious appetite? Yes—that was it! for he had actually lain down near her: she heard him, just then, throw himself on the ground close at hand. He was waiting—yes, deliberately waiting for a degree of hunger that would enable him to take the whole of her into his capacious maw, and leave not even a trace to tell of her fate. And he might wait thus for hours!

She now—since she could endure no longer this killing state of things—ventured to open that eye which was half buried in the leaves: she felt that she could not, for the world, have opened the other eye. What, look directly

into the glaring orbs of the savage monster before her? So she opened, by very slow degrees, the one that was half hid in the leaves—a little—ever so little—at first—then wider—wider still—until, at last, it was staring at full width. But there was nothing within its sweep more formidable-looking than the luxuriant growth of the forest, which only waved in the gentle breeze, and seemed to tell mockingly of peace and safety around, where terror already stalked and destruction was soon to be let loose.

The range of that eye being very limited, she now thought she would venture—in fact, *must* venture—to open the other, which would necessarily embrace the terrible object of her dread. The very first glimpse through the half separated lashes fully confirmed her fears of the hopelessness of her situation. She had only time to see that a great, black, hairy mass lay there almost touching her, when her eye closed instantly, and almost of itself, as though with an instinctive shrinking from the horrible object. Several minutes passed in this way. At length, she heard the animal stir slightly among the dead leaves. The merest chink was again ventured in the eye; and this time the poor girl descried, standing directly over her,—not the ferocious foe she had expected,—but the very best friend, peradventure, that she had in all the wide world. This, of course, could be no other than the ever mysterious, silent, honest Grim.

Now it is but fair to say, had the girl been better acquainted with Bruin, she might have known, that, although he does occasionally indulge those carnivorous propensities with which Nature has feebly endowed him, he vastly prefers, as a general thing, fruits, plants, and above all, honey—when it can be had without too great sacrifice of his feelings: moreover, that the stories of his standing so long over his victims,—like some grim detective bent on

finding out whether they are counterfeiting, — though they may do well enough to place in the Little Red-Ridinghood Series, to frighten children with, are, nevertheless, the merest fudge. The truth is, although the girl's surroundings had afforded her many facilities to do so, she had never availed herself of them to learn much about the habits of wild animals—choosing rather to glean her information about them from books written by persons who actually know little or nothing of what they presume to teach others. The inevitable result was, she remained in lamentable ignorance touching many points of Natural History.

“Oh, what a relief!” thought Filly, “to be snatched from the very jaws of death—even from the imaginary jaws of such a horrible death—and suddenly delivered over to the caresses of this ever-faithful brute!”

She could not contain herself. Prostrated though she had just been by the effects of an extreme terror, she now sprang up, and rushing upon the dog, threw her arms around his great brawny neck and hugged him until he had to struggle hard to get his breath. She would have been glad enough to see him, even under circumstances far less trying; but the sudden and complete reaction of feeling, caused by her emerging from death into life, as it were, well-nigh frenzied her, for the time, with excess of joy.

As for the dog, so long as his mistress lay in such good counterfeit of death, he was sorely puzzled and much exercised to know whether or not all was right with her—fearing, probably, that some accident might have befallen her to make her lie so still. He, therefore, since he could do no better, had taken his station by her side, and, without once withdrawing his eye from her, had watched anxiously for the least movement she might make, and pricking up

his ears, and, ever and anon casting his head askance, listened as tenderly as a mother over her expiring babe, hoping to catch the slightest sound that might tell of yet lingering life.

No sooner, however, did she start up, than his joy knew no bounds. To be sure, he waited, with all due courtesy, to receive her first embrace; but just as soon thereafter as he could extricate himself from her grasp without undue rudeness, and had sufficiently recovered breath from the severe throttling she had given him, he leaped away, and for the first time since his memorable puppyhood, gave his Stoic philosophy to the winds. He wheeled about her—now this way—now that way—at every jump sending the dry leaves whirling in all directions through the air. It was in vain that she called him to her in fond tones—in vain that she scolded him soundly for so unceremoniously leaving her side after their long separation.

“Why, Grim, are you crazy?” she exclaimed at last, seeing he did not mind a word she said to him, but continued his strange antics.

“Come here, Grim, and tell me why you frightened me so?”

For the first time in their long acquaintance, the dog refused to come at her bidding. He seemed to be resolved on taking a jubilee to himself, and doing as he pleased for this once, if never again. He shot off into the woods like an arrow, until almost out of sight, cutting up the virgin soil with his great hind claws, and scattering it broadcast, until it pattered like raindrops on the dead leaves, or struck against his mistress’s face, to the great danger of her eyes. Turning, he came back at about the same rate, and whizzing past her, stayed not his steps a moment, but darted away in the opposite direction. Coming up again to where she stood, he described a semicircle about

her, sweeping so close as almost to touch her person — like the Olympian of old turning the goal — and in a trice was off again into the woods.

He soon came back and performed in a few short spurts — then zigzag — the while tearing up the soil, like the black thunderbolt that he was — and like it, too, in running the thing quite into the ground — at least in his mistress's opinion. He made a succession of leaps into the air, as though clearing imaginary obstacles. He sprang, too, over real ones, such as logs, low-hanging branches, or any object that chanced to be across his course; and his mistress feared, on more than one occasion, — when he approached very close to her with this leap-frog fit on him, — that he was going to be guilty of the signal disrespect of jumping quite over her head. It is, however, due to Grim's uniform good manners to say, that, although such a thought might have flashed through his bewildered brain at some time during these impulsive gambols, his politeness restrained him from any such gross indignity.

A most astonishing thing is, that, during these varied performances, Grim's long-lost voice was gradually coming back to him. He began with a scarcely audible whine, or whimper, while he was yet making his first curvetings round about his mistress — like the first shufflings of an old-time plantation darkey, when he would fain get the hang of a "ho-down" which he is going to dance. This whine became louder and louder, and at the same time shorter and shorter, until, towards the end of his wonderful feats — to which, indeed, one might think it was designed as an accompaniment — there might have been recognized in it some of the rudiments of a genuine bark — which a pup with his eyes just fairly open might not have been ashamed to own. And inasmuch as his eyes were well-nigh ready to open on the memorable occasion when

he had lost his voice, it would seem that he was now trying to resume it at the precise point where he had then so unaccountably left off.

Now, whether the sagacious dog got this exhibition up for the special purpose of diverting his beloved mistress, and thus beguiling her from the wretched state into which, in his super-canine sagacity, he may have seen (who knows?) that terror had thrown her, or whether he was but obeying an instinctive impulse, that was simply irresistible, to work off, by means of these excessive muscular exertions, the exuberance of his joy at meeting once more with her whom he had long since given up as forever lost to him, or whether both these conjectures are in some degree correct, I cannot say. At any rate, both objects seem to have been gained. So far as the girl's diversion was concerned, there was certainly no lack of it. At first, her feeling was that of simple astonishment, mixed perhaps with a transient apprehension that her four-footed friend, heretofore so wholly undemonstrative, must have taken leave of his senses, or he would never, in his old days, fall to capering in this most ridiculous fashion. After he had made a few turns, however, she began to smile,—after a few more, she laughed outright,—and long before he was done with it, she was under the influence of mirth to such an extent that the forest rang with her merry peals, as they came forth one after another, while the tears streamed down her cheeks. At last she was compelled, not only to hold her sides, with very pain, but to avert her eyes occasionally from the ludicrous feats which caused it.

Grim's unwonted behavior served likewise as a vent to his superfluity of spirits, for when he brought his unique pantomime to a close—which he did quite as abruptly as he had opened it—he relapsed so completely into his olden imperturbable way, that his mistress chid him smartly

for running into such extremes: she thought an intermediate stage highly desirable at times. Particularly would she have liked him to preserve that embryo yelp which he had just now favored her with. She was not without hope that, with assiduous care, it might be yet cultivated into a most dogly voice. The only fault, indeed, which she ever had to urge against him was, that, however much he might feel, he never had anything at all to say on any subject that came up between them in these solitudes, where the stillness was often so profound as to be oppressive, and even painful, to her unrelieved ear.

Poor girl! she was fated never to hear his unmelodious notes again. Poor dog! never more, but once, did he vex with them these wild solitudes—and then in a far different key from this, the joyous day of their meeting.

Filly now resumed her journey—the dog, as was his wont, following close behind, though occasionally moving up to her side. She had, since she grew up, retained a foolish habit, contracted in childhood, of putting into words and addressing them to him, such thoughts as others often indulge in, but would never dream of shaping into speech for the benefit of any animal whatever, human or other.

“Grim,” she now said, putting her hand on his head, as they walked along, “look at me, sir, and say how you happened to find me? How in the world did you, Grim?”

Grim looked up, as desired—but said nothing.

Then she began to speculate as to how the thing had happened.

“Oh, I know: when they broke up camp and went away, instead of taking you with them to that horrid war, where you couldn’t have been of any use, they turned you over to those half-dozen men that stayed behind. Some of these were going into town this evening, and had you with

them. Well, when you got to where this path leaves the great road, you struck my trail, where I had just passed along. Of course you would then leave them—or anybody else—and come to me. That was the way. Wasn't it, old fellow?

"Yes—that was the way," she continued, nodding her head as the dog gave an upward glance, which she at once interpreted as an affirmative answer—like an over-fond mamma explaining the first unmeaning accents and gestures of her babe,—or, rather, substituting in their stead something of real meaning,—for her own diversion, and too often, whether intentional or not, with the effect of boring some crusty—and it is probably not too much to add, envious—old bachelor, bystanding.

These speculations gave Filly a hint which she now resolved to make use of in framing a story to mislead the Señorita about her manner of getting to the lake. At the moment when the great fright came upon her, the reader may recollect—though Filly did not, for that scare had knocked every trace of it out of her head forever—that she was just "fixing up" the old lost-child story—revamping it to suit the case—and had nearly completed it, when the mighty Grim, regardless of consequences, came rushing down upon her, clothed with something as much like death to her as anything could well be short of the pale monster himself—except, that, in this case, he was not pale, but very black.

"I'll just pretend," she thought, "that, when they broke up camp yesterday, they left me Grim for a protector, and told me to shift for myself; and that I came here because I thought it was such a pretty place. That will do very well to begin with. It's not exactly true, to be sure, but I begin to think truth is getting rather scarce, anyhow. So that, if I keep on dealing in it altogether—gold, I believe

some of them call it—and never use the baser currency in my dealings, I shall be brought very low at last.

“But I must take care to tell the lady nothing about my having lived on such close terms with Señor. That would never do. I’ll pass myself off as the daughter of one of his married men. And, pray, whose child am I? Nobody knows. I must have a name ready, though: she might ask me what it was—and that would be awkward. Ah, me! I have no name but Filly. A few months ago I hoped it would be Filly Gatewood. And it may be that yet. Who can tell?”

“Let me see: there is Whishton. He and his wife (or whatever she is—or *was*, rather—I believe she’s dead now) are about the best behaved among them, I’ve heard Señor say. Then let it be Whishton, when the great lady comes to ask me about —”

CHAPTER XXVI.

I do believe thee:

Give me thy hand.

Winter’s Tale.

With thoughts so qualified as your charities

Shall best instruct you; measure me.

Winter’s Tale.

MERCIFUL heavens! Grim—there’s the house!” exclaimed the girl, staying her steps as suddenly as her speculations. Stooping down, she peered through the trees at the unpretending cottage, now only a few rods distant. Her heart throbbed violently for a while; but, nerving herself, she succeeded in reducing it to comparative quiet, and went on.

As she walked up to the house she saw no one. Noticing, however, that the doors were open, and some of the windows hoisted, she concluded that the premises were probably not altogether deserted; so she stepped around to that side of the house which looked towards the lake. There, she came upon a lady half reclining in a hammock, with that listless ease and abandoned grace of attitude which none know so well as a Spanish woman how to assume — if, indeed, it is not, in her, a natural gift, not at all needing to be assumed. Now and then she touched the ground with the toe of her dainty foot, which, clothed in a well-fitted slipper, was pendent from the hammock's side, thus giving her suspended cradle a barely perceptible motion to and fro, which contributed much to the luxurious air of the scene.

As Filly approached, the lady's back was towards her. For all the girl could tell, she might have been in a deep reverie; or she might have been gazing in fixed admiration on the beauties which always clustered, at the sunset-hour, around the lovely crystal-clear sheet of water before her. All this looked so luxurious and queenly to Filly, who had now stolen up until almost in contact with the lady — not directly behind her, but somewhat to one side — that she felt no little embarrassment, and did not know exactly in what manner to proceed. After standing there, however, for nearly a minute, she began to feel so foolish that she resolved to make an attempt.

"I should like you to tell me, *Señorita*," she said, in a soft, low tone, "if I may — stay here — all night?"

The lady, startled in the midst of her abstraction by such an unusual sound in these parts as a sweet, feminine voice, was almost ready to think, for the moment, — since no human being was yet visible, — that an angel had asked to tarry with her. She at once leaped from the hammock, and

faced about, to get a look at this wholly unexpected visitor. Seeing before her a beautiful girl, neatly, even tastefully dressed,—though more than a trifle bedraggled—a condition for which in these parts she had long since learned to make due allowance,—and, withal, in every way prepossessing, she came forward as soon as her first surprise was over, and proffered her hand, glad enough, no doubt, to have a guest promising so agreeable a breaking-in upon her loneliness, which, indeed, had been the burden of her interrupted meditations.

“I should be glad truly, to have you stay,” she said, in tones which seemed to come from her heart. “But who is it—if you will let me ask—that is to be my guest to-night?”

“I—I—came from —”

The girl was so overcome by this unlooked-for kindness of manner, and so impressed with the Señorita's superiority to any lady she had yet seen, that she could not, for her life, recollect her manufactured story, and so came very near telling the real one. She was on the point of saying she had just come from the town,—which, for obvious reasons, must have materially damaged her project. But the Señorita, seeing her hesitation, and very naturally attributing it wholly to bashfulness, came graciously to her relief.

“I suppose you have lost your way?” she suggested.

“Yes—not exactly, either. I came from the camp—Camp Wildwood, you know.”

“Why, I thought Captain —”

Here the Señorita, in her turn, seemed a little confused,—which served to reassure Filly, since it tended to bring them towards the same level.

“That is,” resumed Isabella, correcting herself, “I understood they were all to leave the camp yesterday.”

"And so they did," explained Filly. "And this morning I started for town. But by the time I got to where your lake-road leaves the other, I felt so tired, and night was so near, I thought I would come here, where I had heard you were living, and ask you —"

"Not left in the wilderness by yourself?" interrupted the Señorita. "How could they all be so heartless?"

"Not quite by myself," replied Filly, stepping a little aside, by which movement Grim was unveiled to the lady's view — for he had kept close at his mistress's heels. "Here is my escort."

The Señorita started back a step on beholding this huge apparition.

"Is *that* your protector? Why, if he were mine, I shouldn't know whether to be most afraid of him, or of the wolves. He has such a ferocious look."

Now, as the expression of Grim's face was not at all that of ferocity, but merely an habitual, imperturbable calmness, such as can arise only from the consciousness of being equal to any emergency, whenever, wherever, and however it may be sprung, it is more than probable the Señorita only meant that, from his great size, he would be exceedingly formidable as a foe, and that she would, of all things, deprecate the forfeiture of his good will.

"They say he's not pretty," said Filly, supposing the lady meant, in substance, the same thing — only in a very exaggerated degree.

"That opinion is surely correct," observed Isabella, drily, as she again looked at the dog.

"Poor old fellow!" said Filly, patting the dog's great head with her shapely hand of dazzling whiteness, on which glittered several valuable and showy rings — the gift of that faithless lover, to reinstate herself in whose favor was her sole business here.

Now there are not many objects more beautiful than such a hand, so decorated; and the girl could have done nothing that would have tended more than this simple act to mar what little beauty there was in Grim's physiognomy, and at the same time to set off to advantage the caressing hand. It was, if possible, worse than the toad with a jewel in his head, or the Ethiop with one in his ear—the contrast, at least, was more striking. She was, however, very far from intending any such thing; for, not only was Grim a favorite whom she could not for a moment think of derogating in any way whatsoever, but, moreover, vanity was not one of her foibles.

Isabella, with her usual quickness, saw and appreciated all this at a glance, and now became afraid she had hurt the girl's feelings. It certainly speaks well for her kindness of heart, that, although the dog, under the disadvantage of the contrast which his mistress had so unwittingly brought to notice, looked to her eyes, many fold uglier than before, she now tried to find in his face something to offset her very uncomplimentary remark.

"He has a *good* face, though," she said, looking, or pretending to look, more closely at him: "there is nothing sneaking about it. Now I come to see his expression better, I'll venture to say there's no honester dog to be found anywhere."

"You never spoke truer words, Señorita," said Filly, evidently reconciled,—and, to say truth, a little touched.

"But I want to know something about yourself," said Isabella. "What little you have told me of your story only awakens my interest, and makes me wish to learn more. Come—let us sit down here, and talk until supper is ready."

Saying which, she took a seat on one of the skins—which, except during a shower, or when the leaves were

still wet, were kept constantly beneath the trees, from an early hour until bed-time — while Filly perched herself on the other one, hard by.

“Why did you prefer to stay at the camp? I didn’t know that any of our sex ever stayed there?”

“Oh, yes — a few. I — I am the daughter of one of the men.”

“Indeed!” exclaimed the Señorita, as though surprised that such a corrupt tree could bring forth such fruit.

“And your mother — is *she* living?”

“No,” replied Filly, looking down; “my mother is dead.”

“No mother — no home — and her father gone away into a bloody war!” said the Señorita, in a very low tone, and in a half musing mood, as she looked away and turned her gaze — it may have been mechanically, from long habit — on the lake.

“My dear,” she resumed — after a little pause — in louder tones, and again fixing her eyes on the girl, “your fortunes, thus far, are much like my own — only, I think, you are even more to be pitied. At least more to be pitied in some respects,” she added, when she thought of the lamentable condition of her heart-affairs. “I, as well as yourself, have no mother. We are alike, too, in having no home; for, as you may know, I have been driven from mine. I am living here now — or, rather, sojourning for a little while — by the kindness of a friend, who offered me the use of his house.”

“But your father’s living, I suppose?” said Filly — by this time much interested.

“Alas! no,” exclaimed Isabella, glad of the melancholy luxury — rare in those solitudes — of pouring her heavy sorrows into a sympathizing ear. “And that is one of the strokes of fate which I find it hardest to bear: not merely

that he is dead—but the dreadful way in which he was butchered.”

“Butchered!” exclaimed Filly, aghast.

“Yes—by those bloody Gachupins,” replied Isabella, with a look of ineffable sadness. “And not satisfied even with that,” she added,—after a short pause, which was compelled by a choking sensation, while her large dark eyes glistened with moisture,—“they treated his poor lifeless body, like the savages that they are. And as for my dear—dear mother, I have every reason to think she died from the effect of these atrocities. It is certain she never rallied from the shock.”

“It seems to me, Señorita,” said Filly,—with all her naturally strong sympathies roused for the sad lady confronting her, yet with a certain air of hesitation, as though she scarcely knew whether to say it or not,—“that you had not very good ground for saying I was more to be pitied than yourself.”

“You mean, I suppose, because your father is still living? True enough. But besides these, there are other things which —”

The Señorita left the sentence unfinished, for the present—much to Filly’s regret—and looking away again, went off into a reverie. Great as was the girl’s desire to hear the rest of it, she shrank from the rudeness of asking what the lady evidently wished to withhold. She could not, however, refrain from speculating on what those “other things” probably were. Hope, at that moment, sprang up full-fledged in her heart.

“She can only mean,”—thus she fondly mused,—“that, although she is in love with Señor, he has deserted her, instead of returning her love. And I ought to know what *that* means!”

“But you haven’t told me your name yet. What shall

I call you?" asked Isabella, rousing from her absent mood.

"My name is Filly—Whishton. Call me Filly—that's the name I've been used to."

"Well, Filly, I am truly glad you've come to see me. But I hope you'll stay longer than to-night—much longer. Why do you wish to go to Natchitoches? Have you any very particular friends there?"

"Oh, no—I just thought it a better place for me to stay, than out there in the woods; and you know I had no home to go to."

"And so it is a better place. But, if that is all, I hope to persuade you to stay with me—at least until your father comes back,—or just as long as you can. I have no one at all for company now, except two old servants, and you know how dull that must be. My uncle and my brother left, yesterday, for Texas, and will not return until the war is over. To be sure, if we drive the Gachupins out of the province, I may go back to my home near San Antonio,—but, then, it may be a long time before that is done. You can't imagine how lonely I have felt ever since my uncle and brother left me; and if you hadn't come, I really don't think I could have endured it much longer. When you came so suddenly on me a little while ago, I was thinking seriously of breaking up here, and going to Natchitoches myself,—as much as I dislike the thought of leaving such a beautiful place as this. But if you will only promise to stay with me, I would much rather remain here just as long as I can keep you: I don't like to live in a town. Will you promise me?"

"I should be delighted to do so," replied the girl,—who hated, even worse than the Señorita, to be cramped up in town. "But—"

"But what—dear?"

Filly, as we have seen, had had sharp compunctions about leaving her kind old friend, Mrs. Davies, in suspense about her, even for one night only; and now, when she thought how cruel it would be to protract that suspense to an indefinite period, she saw the necessity of at least letting her know where she had resolved to cast her lot. This reflection it was which had arrested her tongue in the middle of the sentence.

"There's something I shall have to attend to in town before I can make that promise," replied Filly.

"Is it something that requires your personal attention? or can I send Miguel in with a note from you," said the Señorita, — "or a message," she added, as she thought of the very great probability that the poor girl could neither read nor write.

"Perhaps that would do," said Filly.

"Oh, no—it wouldn't," she continued when it occurred to her, that she owed it to her old friend in town, after running away from her, not only to go in person and explain her conduct, but to bid her good-bye, before separating from her for, probably, a long time. "I have something else to do there, that I must do myself."

"Well, when will you be obliged to go? Put it off as long as you can."

"Oh, I can't possibly put it off longer than to-morrow."

"But you will come back to me soon?"

"Yes; Grim and I can walk in," she said, laying her hand affectionately on the neck of the dog, who, making himself at home, as was his wont, wherever he chanced to be, had lain down beside his mistress on the skin of that same dreadful bear, which, with the Captain's timely assistance, he had slain nearly a year before. "And if I'm not too tired we can come back the next day."

"Do you never ride on horseback, Filly?"

"Oh yes—whenever I get a chance. I think it's splendid to be on a horse. But I never had a horse; and, so, I've learned to take long walks. I can ride pretty well, though: I often rode Señor's horse."

"Who is Señor?"

"He's—one of the men."

"A Spaniard, I suppose: Señor is a Spanish word."

"Oh, no—he's an American," replied Filly, by this time blushing, and looking quite confused, into the bargain.

Instantly seeing this, the Señorita very considerably forbore to pursue any further the fortuitous investigation, and returned to the original subject. The impression, however, was, then and there, made upon her—which, indeed, remained to the last—that this mysterious "Señor," whatever his right name might be, was the girl's lover, and one, too, on whom she had most probably deigned to smile. It was, in itself, a trivial circumstance; but served, through the mysterious workings of sympathy, to draw the lone girl still closer into her favor.

"Now, I have a nice pony," said Isabella; "and you must n't think of walking so far. Miguel will go in with you to-morrow morning; and I don't see why you can't return in the afternoon."

"Why, yes," replied the girl, delighted at the prospect of such a rare treat: "if I *ride*, there's nothing to prevent my coming back to-morrow."

By this time it was nearly dark. Stefanita now came out to announce supper, and the ladies withdrew to the house.

Filly's was one of those natures which are subject to abrupt transitions, from cheerfulness to despondency, and the reverse, (though her cheerfulness, of late days, seldom came in a very demonstrative guise,) often without adequate cause, and, indeed, at times with no cause at all, so far as a

person of greater equanimity might have been able to judge. From having been, just now, so hopeful that Gatewood cared more for her than he did for the Señorita, she soon found herself plunged again into the depths of despair. All she had yet seen of this lady had impressed her not only favorably, but almost to the verge of adoration. The beauty of her person, the marvellous sweetness of her expression, her charming manners, her exquisite grace, her gentleness, her rich, low, winsome voice, — and, above all, the ever kind turn of her sentiments, — had sunk so deeply into her simple heart, that she no longer presumed to think for a moment, that she herself, who had never enjoyed any of those inestimable advantages, which contact with the world of fashion gives its votaries — if they will but properly avail themselves of them, instead of, as they too often do, so mixing with it, that it proves a curse rather than a blessing — I say, she did not presume to think that she could bear off the palm from any such rival in love as this. On her way to town, next day, her musings showed that her sole bright hope of the previous evening was already gloomed over.

“Her sadness cannot be — as I thought it was — for want of Señor’s love: I have no longer any doubt that he loves her. He *must* love her. How could any man be with such a woman, as much as they say he has been with her, and not lose his heart? I used to think he loved *me*: he told me so — often, and often; and I suppose he was sincere. But from the moment he met with *her*, (it could not have been otherwise,) I was undone! Well, how could he help it? He had eyes, and she had all these charms. I shall have to forgive him: but ah, it will be hard to do! Forget him, I never can.

“I should like to live with her all my life. Yes — even after they are married — if only as a friend to both. I would be willing to do almost anything — make almost any

sacrifice—to win her love, and keep it. Ah! the greatest sacrifice is already made.

“Here am I, thinking about winning her love, when I have already deceived her so. I’m so sorry I told her such stories—and she, all the time, so kind. It was cruel—it was treacherous. To tell her that Señor was one of the men! To tell her, too, that I was the daughter of one of the men! And that my father was still living! Well, he may be living, for anything I know; but I shall never see him, nor know who he is—never.

“I wish, so much, I had told her the truth—or not told her anything at all. But I had to say *something*. Oh, I do wish I had stayed where I was, and not gone near her. I can never tell her the truth about it, now; for that would be owning that I told a lie before,—and with all her kindness to me, that would never do. But I’ll do this much: I’ll go back to her and cheer her lonely hours as well as I can.

“May it not be, after all, that she does not return Señor’s love? No—no—what woman is there in the world that would n’t love *him*? There is nothing left me but to bear it as best I can.”

It must be owned that the girl rather complicated than improved her heart-affairs, by this venturesome visit to the lake, which, before starting out, she had so fondly flattered herself would better her prospects. When she came, she was in love with but one; whereas, she now found herself deeply smitten with another—and that, a rival—one, too, who would most probably bear off the palm.

CHAPTER XXVII.

She, sweet lady, dotes

Upon this spotted and inconstant man.

Midsummer Night's Dream.

I cannot speak, nor think,

Nor dare to know, that which I know.—*Winter's Tale.*

They are the silent griefs which cut the heart-strings.—FORD.

ACCORDING to promise, Filly returned that evening to the lake, "bag and baggage,"—prepared to stay with her new-made friend. She had found Mrs. Davies in great distress over her sudden and mysterious disappearance. The old lady, on missing her, had lost not a moment in causing thorough search to be made, not only in the town, but some distance in the surrounding country; while, at the same time, she dispatched to the site of the late camp an emissary, who was instructed to extend his investigations thereabouts, and as far beyond as the miserable shanties in which most of the wives and wantons of Gatewood's men were hived during the absence of the latter toward Texas. To have sent, for this purpose, into the unpeopled wilderness, at large,—houseless—pathless—limitless—as it was,—would have been the height of madness.

These various searches having proved alike futile, the old dame, although still sorely wrung, had begun to feel in her heart a little of that comfort which always comes from having done one's best in a good cause, when, in stepped Filly and put an instant end—for the time at least—to her solicitude. Her first joy over, she listened absorbedly to the girl's story, of which the latter, of course, told only so much

as her ancient friend had a clear right to know. Then came the reprimand — which, on the whole, was not a very crushing one — and next, the startling announcement from Filly, that she was going to return to the lake that very evening, by urgent invitation of the Señorita, to stay with her while her friends were absent on military business.

Mrs. Davies was a good deal shocked (in her way) to hear this, which she thought savored somewhat of ingratitude. But when she came to recollect that Filly, in taking this course, was but doing the very thing she herself had advised her to do only a day or two before, except, indeed, that she was taking Time a little by the forelock, (which, however, she readily admitted, was, all things considered, a much safer hold on the old fellow than the fetlock,) she gave in with a very good grace, and, like the benevolent creature she was, declared, in the end, her entire willingness for the withdrawal of the only spot of sunshine that had lit up her cheerless old walls for many a day. Accordingly, the two took an affectionate leave of each other, and, as was said, a few lines back, Filly reached the lake in safety.

Grim, who had received his mistress's mandate, to stay there until she came back, did so with his wonted fidelity; and had she stayed away very much longer — nay, had the sky fallen, I verily believe he would have remained as faithfully at his post, as did his counterpart, the old Roman sentinel, at the gate of Pompeii, through all the fearful time when the Sicilian sky came as near falling as perhaps a sky ever did — when cinders, ashes, and fire were being rained on that devoted city. Our four-footed Roman, however — now, no doubt, become a little nervous on the subject of separation from his mistress — had shown what were, for him, unusual signs of anxiety about her return. He had, for instance, kept constantly on that side of the house from

which she had started forth; and had there been any one scrutinizing his movements — which, however, there was not — he might have been seen to look often up the path she had taken, and even to wander forth occasionally a few rods in that direction, as though hoping to catch sight of her returning figure. And when she came at last, there was visible a sparkle in his usually listless eye, while his tail, like certain military campaigns, — first proposed, I believe, by one Horatio Whitetile, but, from some cause, not very successfully executed at the time, — “short, sharp, and decisive,” would actually have suggested to any one who could have seen the point just then, something of a wag.

From this time forth, it is almost needless to say, Filly and the Señorita were fast friends. They were like two fond sisters who have met after a long separation. Their life here was necessarily monotonous; but they kept constantly together, and by the exercise of a little concerted ingenuity, managed almost daily to vary the general routine to such degree as to make things quite endurable. In the matter of reading, to which both were exceedingly partial, they were unfortunately very limited. Could they have had plenty of choice books, Time would have moulted at once his heavy wing, and, donning gossamer instead, would have borne them lightly enough along. Isabella usually sent the old Mexican to town every two or three days, to gather any news that might be stirring, or to purchase groceries, or other articles essential to run the domestic machinery with any kind of comfort. On these occasions he had a standing order to bring back with him such newspapers or books as he might find purchasable. The consequence was, he rarely returned without one or more of the former — but to get possession of a book was indeed a rare event.

Miguel, although by no means an Isaak Walton, usually managed to keep the establishment well supplied with such fish as abounded in the lake. Nor was he either a Nimrod, or a "crack" shot,—yet, where game was so abundant that a gun discharged, at random, into a thicket, might be reasonably expected to bring something down,—a deer, or a turkey, or something else, and possibly all three,—must have been very derelict indeed, had he suffered the ladies to be stinted in viands. On one occasion of his going forth, armed and equipped, to do justifiable murder upon the denizens of the forest, the ladies, for the sake of the excitement it promised, accompanied him to the deer-station and thence to the turkey-roost. This once, however, sufficed for all time. To be sure, they were variety-seekers, and here was no lack of variety,—but it could hardly be said to be of agreeable quality. They had been accustomed, when they had before gone forth with hunters—as, indeed, both of them had often done—to seeing the victim fall dead in its tracks from a ball sent with unerring aim through brain or heart. But Miguel—although he no doubt did the thing as neatly as he could, and began to think himself a "star" hunter—made really such a bungle of it, that the mangled animal was a long time in the death-throes, and at last was put out of its protracted misery after most unscientific fashions,—a deer, by crushing the skull with the rifle-butt; one of the feathered tribe, by a wrench of the neck,—both methods producing sounds revolting to the ear of any but a veritable savage.

Not wishing to witness, a second time, the agonies of the poor dumb creatures,—who not only had done them no harm while living, but were likely, after due preparation by Stefanita, to do them much good when dead,—they henceforth and forever firmly but courteously declined the ur-

gent solicitations of the old Mexican to attend his bloody exhibitions,—when not fellow-creatures, to be sure, as of old, but poor innocent brutes, were to be “butchered to make a holiday.”

They sometimes strolled out into the woods to gather flowers, Grim always acting as escort. The Señorita was at first very loth to go, for fear of encountering wild beasts; and when at length she did consent to make the venture, could not be persuaded to trust herself out of sight of the house. On her companion's assurance, however, confidently given and frequently iterated, that there was not the least danger when Grim was about,—backed by many stories of his prowess in throttling the largest and most ferocious beasts to death, single-handed,—Isabella was induced to extend her walk a little every day, until, finally, she ventured as far as she pleased without a fear, or even a thought, of molestation.

The Señorita would sometimes vary these pedestrian excursions by sallying forth, with Filly behind her, on the pony—Miguel's horse being a mule, (by an “Irish bull,”) and therefore scarcely ridable by a lady, consistently with comfort. Thus mounted, they would thread the woods, along the bridle-paths, for miles; and although more than once lost on these occasions, their four-footed factotum—their walking forest-encyclopædia—the inevitable Grim, when appealed to show them the way back, was never for a moment at a loss.

But the lake was their favorite place of resort. When Filly first caught sight of the little boat,—when strolling on the beach, alone, one day soon after her arrival,—she resolved she would learn to row, so that she and the Señorita might glide away over the bright water whenever and whithersoever they pleased. With this determination, and without more ado, she leaped into the beautiful wee craft,

and taking up an oar, pushed out boldly from the shelving beach. No sooner, however, did she feel the peculiar sensation which such motion imparts to a person who has never experienced it, or, having once experienced it, has long since forgotten what it is, than she felt a chord in her memory, which had not been awakened for years, so rudely swept, that its vibrations thrilled through her whole soul. How slight oft-times the influences which thus rouse the emotions,—bringing up thoughts and recollections—the bitter no less than the sweet—which, for years, had lain dormant, or buried in oblivion. A sudden whiff of your dead sweetheart's favorite flower, coming upon you, it may be, in the midst of gayety, may recall some happy tryst when she wore that flower over her heart, and when the tide of your love flowed along in unwonted smoothness, with no warning of the rocks so close ahead. The cooing of a distant dove may bring back to your recollection that evening when, a child, you went out, alone and forlorn, to muse for the first time over your mother's grave—for then, as now, that mournful voice was plaining to you from afar. And so it is with the other senses.

So, too, it was with Filly. She had not even so much as seen a boat for years; but when she felt this one gliding along under her, from the sudden impulse she had given it, there trooped up, as from the very grave, memories of that wilder life she had once led, when, in a frail canoe, guided by swarthy, often bloody, hands, she had stemmed the rapids of dashing rivers, or shot over the surface of some glassy lake that was set, like a gem, in the wilderness which was even then her home.

So vividly did the renewal of this long unfelt motion recall those hours of her cheerless childhood, and so painfully did the thought of them affect her, that she at once dropped the oar and sank down into the bottom of the

boat. Resolved, however, not to give way (so foolishly, as she thought it) to a mere recollection, in a few minutes she rose and resumed the oar; and in her persistent efforts to guide and propel the boat, her attention was so completely diverted from the dread association which had upset her equanimity, that she forgot all about it.

Day after day, henceforward, could she have been seen thus practising upon the lake; and it was not many days before she had made herself—considering the time and opportunities of her apprenticeship—a pretty fair oarswoman,—at least, sufficiently so to induce Isabella, on an urgent invitation, to venture out with her. And from that time, scarcely a day passed that they were not skimming about over the water, circumnavigating the miniature islands, or lolling listlessly in the boat, with the oars shipped, leaving it to the sport of the breeze and of the little waves of the lake, which swung it lazily on its gently breathing bosom; while the Señorita, who always took her guitar along on these occasions, would sing some stirring patriotic ballad, which suited well her own taste; or, as was much oftener the case, some melancholy love-song which accorded with the tastes of both.

But while the two girls were such fast friends, neither had more than the vaguest suspicion of the main secret of the other's life—that which, more than all other things combined, influenced the thoughts, motives, and feelings of her companion. The one labored under the delusion that she really knew a good deal about the other's heart-affairs; but it was, at most, only a delusion. The other had but made a sort of wild conjecture that her guest had been smitten with that passion, which to herself had proved at once the joy and misery of life. Filly may sometimes have wondered why, if the Señorita really loved Gatewood, she had never even so much as mentioned his name, when she

had been far from reticent about other matters no less personal to herself. But when she came to think of it fully, was not that self-imposed silence a very strong proof, in itself, that she loved him — and that, too, with so deep a love that she could not lightly utter his name? “*I would not speak of him to others,*” she thought, “either now, or when I used to think he loved me so well.”

Moreover, when she recollected that, on the first evening of their meeting, the Señorita, during their conversation, partly pronounced his name, then checked herself, and looking confused, finally passed entirely around it, she was led — judging from what her own feelings would have been in the same predicament — to hold this, too, as a sure sign of love. She did not, for a moment, suspect that her hostess’s real motive for silence with regard to him was, that she wished to dismiss him entirely from her mind, except in so far as he was a champion of her country’s freedom; and that, even as such, it would have pained her exceedingly to allow his name to pass her lips — even those lips on which his passionate kisses had, but a few days ago, been imprinted. She was offering herself up as a sacrifice to a hallowed cause; the bare thought of an immolation so ruinous to her individual happiness agonized her; the bare thought of the glorious end to be attained for her bleeding country elated and sustained her. But whether thinking of this theme or of the other, she felt that her use of his name was but so much unnecessary self-torture.

The two, then, keeping clear of love, talked of almost everything else. Filly, on her part, gave the Señorita a detailed, and by no means uninteresting account of how she had spent her life in camp, together with her views and feelings amid surroundings of a character so very exceptional — taking care, of course, to keep out of sight her

relations with the Chief—indeed, without once throwing out the remotest hint that she had even a casual acquaintance with him.

On the other hand, the Señorita, with the exception of that passion which had tinged the whole woof of her existence, gave her companion, at various times, such glimpses of her past as could not but prove both entertaining and instructive to one who had derived from novels alone nearly all the knowledge of society which she possessed—a detail of real experience in matters of the fashionable world being to her something wholly new. The truth is, Isabella became—though without once thinking of it in that light—the instructress of this friendless and untutored girl. Whether they were riding, or boating, or roaming on foot through the woods, she was delivering a series of peripatetic lectures,—which, though entirely improvised and without systematic arrangement, were, as regards the edification they afforded and their refining influence on the audience, far above the stolen thunder which is hurled forth in the vaunted lyceums of certain sections by the conceited Jovelings of the present day.

The most frequent topic, however, and one on which Isabella delighted particularly to dwell, was the history and existing condition of her native country. That this subject was constantly nearest her heart, it is to be hoped the reader has already seen and believed; and that she should think it of no ordinary interest to her guest seems surely reasonable when we take into account her belief that the latter's father, and perhaps her lover, were on the march to do battle in behalf of that country. And when she found that Filly listened to her favorite theme with the most intense interest, this discovery only incited her to set forth still more eloquently the sufferings and wrongs so long endured by her fellow-citizens,—wholly ignorant,

all the time, of the fact, that, even had Filly a father, and had that father been enlisted in the cause, her own betrothed — but alas, not her beloved! — who likewise was in the patriot ranks, was far dearer to the girl than any father could be — that around him circled alike all her thoughts by day and all her dreams by night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In his grave
Assure thyself my love is buried.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

I see some sparkles of a better hope.

King Richard II.

Go seek him; tell him I would speak with him.

As You Like It.

ONE evening, the Señorita and her companion were reclining, side by side, in the hammock, discussing the prospects of the campaign which was then being initiated.

“Suppose,” said Filly, after they had talked a good while, “our army, or a part of it, should be captured: what do you think would be their fate?”

She said *their* fate — but she thought, *his* fate.

“Filly, don’t let us think of that — rather let us think of a brighter ending. I cannot bear even to imagine them in the hands of such cruel foes as those Gachupins are; for, if not murdered outright,—as I have already told you was the fate of my father and so many of our noblest leaders,—they would no doubt be doomed to drag out, in dungeons, or the scarcely less dreadful mines, such wretched lives as might well make them pray for death to relieve them.”

The speaker, as she said this, was thinking of Quere-taro's horrors, which she had witnessed ; and as they came so vividly back upon her memory, she shuddered through her whole frame.

"Don't let us think of it," she repeated: "it is too horrible!"

"You shudder, Señorita, at the mere thought of any one being thrown into a Mexican prison. And I don't wonder, for I shuddered once myself, on hearing a poor prisoner, who had escaped from one of them, tell his sad story. It was, indeed, so dreadful, that I would n't let him go on with it, but begged him to —"

"You heard a—When?—Where?—Who?" exclaimed the Señorita, starting suddenly to her elbow, and manifesting such intense interest in her friend's words, that the latter, wholly at a loss to account for it, became, for a little while, quite disconcerted, and could make no reply.

Perceiving this, Isabella, with great effort, suppressed her excitement somewhat, and said, with an air of comparative calmness, though she was still perceptibly affected:

"Filly, when did you see such a prisoner?" then added, by way of explanation, "I had a friend once, who escaped from a Mexican prison: I have never since been able to hear anything of him. This very person may have been my friend."

"Well," replied Filly, "I saw him about three years ago."

"Where?" asked the other, eagerly.

"He came into our camp. He was so broken down by his terrible journey in escaping, that he lay ill there a long time."

Filly here recited to the Señorita the bare outlines of what she had done for the poor sufferer; and so far from according herself justice with regard to the service, which,

although a mere child, she had rendered him in her voluntary capacity of nurse, in his helpless — well-nigh hopeless — condition, she chose not to dwell on the affecting details of such kindly attentions, as he lay, through many long weeks of fever and delirium, writhing and groaning in the Chief's tent, which the latter had given up wholly for his accommodation. In a word, it was to her untiring care and devotion that he owed his life.

If Isabella, for any reason, really wished to keep her secret from her companion, it was well for her that the shades of twilight now veiled her face. To be sure, she had succeeded in bringing under control her voice, which at first had trembled, and indeed almost wholly failed her, and she had likewise in a great measure repressed certain outward signs of eagerness, which, at the outset of this impending development, she had betrayed, — but a ghostly pallor still pervaded her countenance, and she was fain to keep her hand pressed upon her heart to moderate its fearful throbbings — signs of her dreadful suspense, which Filly, owing to the imperfect light, could know nothing of.

"What — was his — name?" Isabella managed to falter forth, — afraid to ask, yet hoping that the name, which was still, as it had been for years, dearer to her than any on earth, might, in answer to her inquiry, come from the girl's lips. Had it been so, it had been the sweetest sound that ever thrilled her soul. How great, then, was her disappointment, when Filly said, after a little pause, to ransack her memory :

"Señorita, really, I have forgotten."

"Forgotten! — surely, not forgotten? Would you know it if you were to hear it?"

"I think so. I am almost sure of it. Yes, Señorita, I know I would."

"Was it King?" demanded Isabella, hanging on the reply.

"No — that was not it."

"Not Carlos King? Think again," she said, heart-sick with this sudden extinction of her hope, strangled, like a still-born babe, at the very moment of its birth.

"No, I'm certain that was not his name. His first name, I remember perfectly, is a very common one among us Americans; it was John — Juan, I believe you call it in your language. As I never called him anything else but Mr. John, and very seldom heard his other name, I have forgotten it. I know it was a rather queer one, though; and I'm confident, that, if I could only hear it pronounced, I should remember it at once."

It made no difference now to the Señorita what the name was, since she had found it was *not* Carlos King, — and so suddenly did her intense interest in the poor prisoner subside, that it was even doubtful whether she heard at all the last portion of the girl's answer. She sank back to her original position in the hammock, and resigned herself to a despair which was far worse than before. It was as when the midnight lightning dazzles for an instant our eyes which we were straining to discern our way along some chasm's verge, and leaves us in tenfold gloom. But as, after the flash, we come again to see a little, until at length we are enabled to grope darklingly above the abyss as before, so her heart gradually regained its not quite rayless condition.

The two remained in silence many minutes. At length the Señorita started up again, as a new gleam (alas, she did not know it was a fleeting will-o'-the-wisp!) shot athwart her cheerless path.

"Did he escape from the Queretaro prison, Filly?" she asked.

"No: from Monclova. I have a very distinct recollection of *that* — because I had often heard of Monclova before."

This reply quenched again all her hope. She had thought it possible that this last name might have been assumed, with the view of aiding his disguise whilst escaping, and, from policy, not laid aside, even after he reached Gatewood's camp. But gathering from the girl's answer that this was not *her* prisoner of Queretaro, she dismissed him from her thoughts.

"Filly," said the Señorita, the next evening, as they strolled, in a more than usually pensive mood, a short distance into the wood, "let's sit down here on this log, which looks so tempting with its mossy cushion: I wish to have a little talk with you on the same subject we were discussing yesterday evening."

The two accordingly took their seats together on the log.

"You said you had forgotten the name of the prisoner who escaped from Monclova and was so long sick in your camp," the Señorita began. "But I think, too, you said, that, if you were to hear his name, you would know it?"

"Oh, yes, Señorita, — I should, without the least doubt."

"And I suppose, if you were to see it written, you could n't fail to recognize it?"

"Of course not."

"Then, Filly, glance over this list, — or, rather, read carefully every name on it," — said Isabella, drawing a paper from her bosom, unfolding it, and handing it to the girl, — "and tell me whether that name is there or not. These are the Americans who are enlisted in our cause. My uncle, who gave me the list, said it embraced all of them."

Filly took the paper, and cheerfully addressed herself to the task put upon her. It was, however, no easy one; for, not only had the names been carelessly copied, and with evident hurry, but the copying had been done with very pale ink.

She had, therefore, to give each word a careful mental spelling before she could decide whether or not it was the one so longed for.

Isabella watched this slow procedure with much apparent solicitude, and with a degree of impatience that could not have been mistaken by any one watching the workings of her face. Long, therefore, before her companion had got half through the list, she was on the point of taking it from her hand and reading it aloud to her,—which she could have done with much more dispatch than the girl could decipher them, from the fact that she had already gone over them all, from beginning to end, perhaps a score of times, since the list had been in her possession. Just as she was in the act, however, of seizing upon it with this intention, Filly exclaimed, her face betraying the deep interest which she felt in the matter:

“There it is!—John Gatley—I remember it so well, now that I see it. *There*, Señorita, John Gatley,” she repeated, reaching the list out toward Isabella and pointing with her finger to the name. “Mr. John I used to call him. I don’t believe I ever called him Mr. Gatley after the first day he told me his name. And I hardly ever heard any one else call him that, for it was very seldom that any one else saw him while he was sick; and almost as soon as he got well enough to sit up, he left, on one of the camp-horses which was given him. It’s hardly any wonder, then, that I forgot his name,” she added, apologetically. “But that’s it—I’m just as certain as I ever was of anything in my life. What was your friend’s name? I really forget.”

Seeing that the Señorita, from absent-mindedness, or some other cause, was not likely to answer, Filly, after a brief rummaging of her memory, was able to recall the other name.

"Oh, yes — Carlos King. Well, the names are not much alike, I must confess."

"No," said the other, roused from her abstraction at the sound of that name ever dear to her. "But, Filly, it has struck me, that he may have gone under an assumed name, at that time, for the greater safety it would afford."

"But why should he not go back to his own name now?" asked Filly.

"That quite puzzles me," replied Isabella, "though it is possible he may have some good reason for it."

"I don't see what it can be, then," returned the girl, discouragingly enough.

"Well," replied the Señorita, "one reason that occurs to me, is, if captured in this war, and recognized as the escaped prisoner, by means of his name — which I suppose has long ago been made known to all the Spanish officials — it would probably go much harder with him."

"Yes — there may be something in that. But, then, Señorita, he did n't escape from the same prison as your — friend."

Now, Filly had by this time begun to think that this unfortunate man must be more than a mere friend; hence, her hesitation about whether she might not use a stronger word. Indeed, the Señorita, even so long ago as during the colloquy of the previous evening, supposed that Filly had guessed her secret. She, however, had not chosen to make confession of her heart-affairs in so many words, though she had, from that time forward, no objection in the world to the girl knowing of them if she could manage to find them out for herself from any language that might escape her lips — from any sign she might give — or from any deed she might do — in her endeavors to solve this mystery, possibly so vital to her happiness.

"That is true," said the Señorita, dejectedly: "my friend escaped from Queretaro."

There was nothing more said for several minutes.

"Well, Filly," resumed Isabella at length, "I have one more question to ask you: your answer to that will determine whether I shall ever trouble you again on this subject. If the prisoner's hair was black, or very dark, or if his eyes were blue,—he was, beyond all doubt, not the friend I seek."

"But," replied the girl, "his eyes were brown,—and his hair was neither black nor very dark."

"What then?"

"Yellow."

"Do you mean, golden?" demanded Isabella, earnestly.

"Oh, yes — golden: that expresses the color exactly."

"Are you sure?" exclaimed Isabella, starting from her seat to a position confronting the girl, and leaning forward, with a hand on each of the latter's shoulders, — as though resolved to catch every syllable she might utter.

"I'm quite sure, Señorita; for, one day, when he had begun to recover, and I was combing his hair, and trying to get the tangles out—for it was very long and wavy—the sun came out from behind a cloud and shone through it. I had never seen hair like it before, and I recollect so well, I said to him, 'Mr. John, your hair looks just like gold.' 'Yes,' he said, 'I believe it does, when a sun-beam gets tangled in it.'"

"His very hair!" exclaimed Isabella, sinking back again to her seat on the log. "Oh, it may be Carlos yet!"

"But how can it be, Señorita, when he bears an altogether different name, and escaped from a different prison?"

"I do not know. Oh, Filly, for mercy's sake, don't crush to death what little hope I have! No—no—let me still hope, if I can—though ever so little."

But the girl's reason for not regarding the matter in a

more encouraging light, was by no means because she sought to destroy the Señorita's hopeful prospects: she would have done almost anything to bless her. It was because this was such joyful news for herself as well, that she could not believe it true. And it was joyful news, for the reason, that, should her rival's former lover—for lover she, by this time, firmly believed him to be—come, and bear her off, Señor might yet restore *her* to her olden place in his affections.

"Now, Filly, to find out whether this is so or not: how can it be done?"

"How *can* it be done?" echoed the girl, with an eagerness that might well have surprised the other, had her thoughts not been so intensely preoccupied. "Oh, if I could only help you to do *that*, Señorita!"

"I think you *can* help me," said the Señorita, with a calmness that was truly marvellous when compared with her recent exhibition of feeling; for now she found, that, before there could be any hope of success, clear, unbiassed judgment must be brought to bear upon this question of how to do the thing,—while all bewildering emotion must be laid aside. "Miguel has just returned from Natchitoches, and in questioning him for news—as you know I always do when he has been to town—I learned that all the American volunteers leave Natchitoches to-morrow morning, at a very early hour, on their march to Texas. As they are infantry, noon, or a little after, will probably be the time they will pass near here. Now, if you will only ride out to the main road, station yourself there, and eye them closely as they file along, you will no doubt see Mr. Gatley. Should you know him now, Filly, think you?"

"Know him, indeed! To be sure: I shall never forget *that* face."

"Call him aside; and when you shall get to where none

may hear you, and after you have told him who you are,—if he does not recognize you, which he may not do, as you were a mere child when he saw you last,—whisper in his ear the name—not this name here on the list, but the old name I told you of—you know what it is. It will be a talisman that will probably make him betray himself to you on the spot, even if he should be loth to put off his disguise. And, Filly, should it be he—you—you will know what to do *then*. Will you do this much for me?”

“Oh, yes—I will—to be sure I will: I’ll do anything—anything!”

Filly perhaps never made a promise more willingly than this one; and when the hour of noon approached, she never started forth more cheerfully to do another’s bidding.

CHAPTER XXIX.

If this be so, as yet the glass seems true,
I shall have share in this most happy work.

Twelfth Night.

The image of it gives me content already, and I trust it will grow to a most prosperous perfection. — *Measure for Measure.*

MOUNTED on Isabella’s pony, and accompanied, of course, by Grim, Filly soon reached the road. Scarcely had she selected a point favorable for viewing the men as they should pass, before she thought she could distinguish, coming from towards the town, the roll of a still distant drum. Only a few minutes more were required to confirm fully her opinion as to the nature of the sound. She seated herself at the root of a tree, and awaited the

crisis with what patience she could command. In less than an hour, the sound had come so near, that she found herself straining her eyes to catch the first glimpse of the column, as it should emerge, at the nearest turn in the road, from behind the woods which, as yet, concealed it from her view. Presently, the thin outskirts of a dust-cloud floated slowly around the turn; and ere the maiden's throbbing heart had told ten more pulsations, the head of the column appeared. Soon it came quite abreast of her station; and as they marched past, many a glance was turned upon this fairy apparition and the canine giant who attended her,—many a comment was made complimentary of her beauty,—and many words of wonder as to who she could be, were exchanged. They probably thought her the daughter of some adventurous Daniel Boone who had settled hereabouts.

Filly, however, did not observe their glances—did not heed, nor even hear, their words. She was wholly intent on the one object which had brought her there—to subject to the closest scrutiny every face that passed. When about half the column had gone by, a halt was ordered, that all might rest awhile under the shade; for it was the month of June, and the mid-day sun beat down on them with oppressive heat. They accordingly broke ranks,—some seating themselves beneath the trees by the road-side, to converse, or laugh and joke,—others penetrating into the woods, and perching themselves on fallen trees, or stretching out their limbs at ease,—some in groups, others solitary,—on the dead leaves that covered the earth, to meditate, peradventure, on the momentous undertaking before them, which they fondly imagined was to result in the founding of a new nation, or the re-modelling of an old one, on the immortal principles that they had been so well taught by their fathers how to maintain.

It was one of these last, that Filly — catching but a partial sight of him at a distance, through the growth of the forest — took to be the one whom she was in search of; and on approaching him (leading her horse) as he lay leaning on his elbow, apart from the rest and quite out of their sight, she recognized him as, beyond all question, the man she had nursed three years before through a long and dangerous illness.

When he left the camp, the traces of disease were still visible on his person — his form was somewhat bent — his step was still languid, and his face pale and haggard. Even in that forlorn condition the girl — making due allowance for such disadvantages — had been greatly impressed with his appearance. But now when she came suddenly upon him in full possession of health and vigor, she found him a man of no common mould as regards both symmetry of person and manly beauty of face. By this time, however, she was too much interested and excited by the prospects opening before her, to make any very particular note of his prepossessing points.

Discovering her approach, he rose to his feet, and by the act — gracefully done — a tall, straight, well-knit figure was displayed to the greatest advantage. His long, auburn hair swept his shoulders. He had before taken off his cap to admit to his heated brow the ever cool air of those deep shades. His forehead was a noble one, broad, and high, and beetling — as though a very fortress of thought. A silky, brown beard decorated the lower part of his face and hung far down over his deep muscular chest.

As the girl drew very near him, still leading her horse, his large eyes, of a dark hazel hue, beamed on her mildly enough, but, also, with an expression made up of wonder and surprise.

“Mr. Gatley,” she began, seeing she was not recognized, “I reckon you don’t know me.”

"I do not," he replied, in deep rich tones, as he stepped forward. "Is it some one I ought to know?"

"You certainly ought, sir, if I had not changed so: I was but a little thing when you saw me last. But perhaps if I were to call you Mr. John, you would —"

"Oh, it's Filly!" he exclaimed, seizing her in his arms, and before she could prevent it — if she would have done so — imprinting a kiss on her cheek, doubtless regarding her — as she lived in his recollection — a mere child.

The girl flushed at this, and stepping back and looking just a little bit dignified, said:

"Mr. Gatley, you forget that I am a woman now."

"Oh, I beg pardon, Filly," he said, somewhat confused under the gentle rebuke. "Why, you do begin to look like a woman, sure enough. I really forgot that you could ever get to be one — you were so small then. You were large enough, though, to save my life, Filly; for I shall always think you did that, and shall never cease to be grateful to you for it."

He said this with an expression of gratitude on his face, — which was evidently such a face as glasses forth the soul of its possessor, whatever the feeling by which he may be swayed, or however slight that feeling may be. Love could languish there, and resentment could flush, — sensibility could shrink, — pity weep, — and, doubtless, humor could twinkle, too, in happier days, for all these were in his soul — and much more — and his face was its faithful mirror.

"I am delighted to see you once more," he went on. "How have you been? *where* have you been? Tell me all about yourself, little girl. Don't look so grave — you used to be so gay, and that helped much to save me, when I lay moaning and raving in that tent. Where is Captain —"

"Mr. John — Mr. Gatley, rather — do you know Carlos

King?" she interrupted, just at the point when she knew he was going to inquire for Gatewood, at the same time looking steadfastly at him, as though she would read the least change which the question might produce in his countenance.

For an instant he seemed at a loss what to do or say. It was, however, only an instant.

"Yes," he replied: "he is — or perhaps I should say, *was* — a friend of mine."

"Why, 'was'?"

"Because they say he is dead."

"Do you know that he is dead?"

"I do not; but I know he was one of Nolan's men, as I was myself, and was captured with the rest of us, and thrown into some dungeon in Mexico. This I have always thought equivalent to death, unless one gets away, and *I* am perhaps the only one of Nolan's little band that escaped. So you can draw your own inference as to whether he is still living or not. But, Filly, why are you so desirous to know something about King, that you have perhaps sought me out for this very purpose?"

"*I have* sought you out expressly to learn his fate, Mr. John," replied the girl. "Glad as I am to meet you again, I should n't have thought of coming here, in this way — among all these men, too — just for that."

"Was he a friend of yours?"

"Oh no — I never saw him in my life."

"That's strange, indeed. Does what you have to say concern him much?"

"It ought to, I think; and it certainly concerns some one else very deeply."

"Some one else!" echoed Gatley, evidently getting much interested for his friend, King. "Who is *that*?"

"As you know nothing of the gentleman, Mr. John, and

may never see him again — in fact, as you think him dead, and cannot possibly see him any more to tell him, I don't know that I ought to betray his secret to you, particularly as it is the secret of another person, too — one you most likely never saw, or even heard of."

"‘His secret’ — and ‘the secret of another,’" said Gately, in low tones, and looking down, as though he said it to himself. "What can all that mean?"

"I didn't tell you I thought him dead, Filly," he said, breaking off his reverie and raising his eyes from the ground. "I merely told you he was a prisoner in Mexico, and I always regarded that as much the same as being dead."

"It seems to me there's not much difference between saying that, and saying you thought him dead," persisted the girl.

"Well, the difference is, I may possibly see my friend some day — that's all."

"In fact," he went on, after a brief pause, "I not only know that he is alive, but have every reason to think I shall see him again — indeed, I am almost certain of it."

"Soon?"

"Yes — soon."

"Why, Mr. John, I don't see how you can be certain about seeing him again: you may never return from this war — you may be killed."

"Filly, my friend is with this little army now."

"He *is*? Oh, Mr. John! why couldn't you tell me that before, and allow me the chance of speaking with him?" said the girl, somewhat irritated. "I'm afraid it's too late now; there's the drum beating for a start. Show him to me — will you? before they go — please!" she said, suddenly changing her tone to a pleading key.

"I didn't tell you before, that he was here, Filly, be-

cause I knew he had particular reasons for not being recognized. He is in disguise, and is not known as Carlos King, even to his comrades in arms. I am the only person here who knows him as such. In truth, I have the best grounds for thinking that no one in the world but myself knows him to be living; and you must see that it would hardly be right to betray his trust without sufficient cause. If, however, you will say, that what you have to tell him is, beyond all manner of doubt, of great importance to him, I think I may venture to introduce him to you."

"It is of such importance," replied the girl, "that he will rejoice over it the rest of his life — be that short or long."

Gatley looked down at the dead leaves which lay strewn at his feet, and seemed to study for a moment.

"But, Mr. John," replied the girl, with persistent incredulity, "I hardly know how to believe that Mr. King is with this army: I saw a full list of the names yesterday, and his was not among them."

"His name," replied the soldier, "is just wherein he has disguised himself. In everything else he is the same."

"And, pray, what name did he take? I think you *might* tell me, Mr. John, before they all go: they are starting *now*."

"John Gatley."

The girl looked at him in utter bewilderment.

"Are you Carlos King, then?"

"I'm the man, Filly. Now what is it you have to tell me?"

"Oh, Mr. John!" she exclaimed, springing forward, and seizing his hand in both her own, and at the same time looking fixedly in his face, — "*are* you, really and truly?"

"Yes. Now tell me: for, see! they have all started, and I have but little time to listen. *I* am the pleader now."

This sudden discovery—that she had so thoroughly succeeded in her mission—embarrassed the girl to such an extent that she scarcely knew where to begin, nor, indeed, the substance of what to say after she should have begun. She tried hard, though vainly, to recall the programme laid down for her by the Señorita—though heretofore she had not once thought of it, but had been conducting the affair, all along, according to her own notions, and meeting emergencies, as they arose, with her own resources.

"The Señorita—" she at length managed to say, but could get no further.

"Well?" said Gatley, calmly enough, though by no means uninterested.

"The Señorita—Isabella—" she faltered forth; then stopped,—possibly with a vague notion that he would, in some way, come to her relief.

He did come. He forthwith took up her disjointed words, and put them together.

"The Señorita Isabella?" he exclaimed, seizing the girl's arms, and looking intensely into the face close before his own. "Isabella what? Tell me the name: for heaven's sake! do you mean—"

"Isabella Delgado."

"What of her?—What of her? I say!"

"She is here."

"*She* here?" he cried, releasing the girl, and looking around in every direction, as though he expected his beloved to start from behind some bush, and, *presto*, rush into his arms.

"I don't mean just here," explained Filly, observing his earnest search. "She's at the lake."

"The lake? What lake? Where is the lake, Filly? how far?"

"Only a mile or two."

"Oh, show me the way: guide me to her!"

"I will," she said, as, with his assistance, she leaped on her horse.

They forthwith started off—he walking by her side—Grim trudging along in the rear.

As may well be believed, the two were not long on their way. During the time thus occupied, but little was said. Each was too busy thinking either to question, or to volunteer information to the other. Filly was absorbed in reflecting on the importance to her of the development just made, and in speculating, in detail, on the prospects which it would secure her. To be sure, she did not altogether lose sight of the happiness which must accrue to her friend, the Señorita; but where she spent one thought on this result, she lavished a hundred on the other.

King, for his part, thought, at first, only of the joy of meeting with his long-lost sweetheart. The mere anticipation of this was sufficient to fill his breast to the exclusion of everything else, until they had made, probably, half the distance. By that time he began to rally a little from the ecstatic shock, and to reduce to something like order, the emotional hurly-burly, of which his palpitating heart was the centre.

"What could have brought her to live in such a howling wilderness as this?" he asked himself, and not getting any satisfactory answer from within, he addressed to the girl a query of the same purport.

In replying, she did not enter into particulars; for, in that case, much would have had to be said about Gatewood's agency in the matter,—and that was a subject on which

she was always loth to speak. In fact, she never mentioned his name to any one whatever, when it was possible to avoid it.

"She was driven from her home by the Spaniards," said the girl.

"So I supposed. But why should she stop here? why didn't she make her way to the United States — to Natchitoches, at least?"

"I believe," replied Filly, "that the few vacant houses in town were filled by refugees from Mexico and Texas, before she got there. A gentleman, who had just built on the lake, heard of this and offered her his house: so she concluded to live there."

"Who was with her in her flight?"

"Her uncle and her brother."

"Not her parents?"

"No — they are both dead. Her father was killed during the war, and her mother died soon afterwards."

The tender-hearted girl shrank from telling him the whole dreadful truth, as she had heard it from the Señorita — that both of them had been murdered, — the one directly, — the other indirectly.

"Are her uncle and brother still with her?"

"They are not. They started, two or three weeks ago, for Texas, with the advance of the patriot army."

"Filly, surely you don't mean to say she is living in these wilds alone?"

"With only an old Mexican and his wife — as servants. Then, I have been staying with her ever since the army left. Oh, Mr. John, there's no danger at all while Grim's about," said she, looking behind at the dog. "Don't you remember Grim, sir?"

"Yes — I remember him now, Filly, — since you called my attention to him; but I had not really noticed before

that there was a dog along with us. Grim is a great dog, and, no doubt, some little protection; but I don't like to see ladies expose themselves in such lonely places as this, where so many terrible things may befall them.

CHAPTER XXX.

Our hearts wear feathers, that before wore lead.

The Ranger's Tragedy.

My stay must be stolen out of other affairs.

Measure for Measure.

ISABELLA, about the time she thought Filly ought to be coming back, took her station at the open window of her room, facing in the direction the latter would return. She had in her hand, when she first sat down, a recently opened letter and some newspapers, which she had probably been reading, or at least making some effort to do so. These, however, soon dropped to the floor, from her lap, where she had placed them soon after taking her seat.

Although she had scarcely the shadow of a hope that the girl would bring her any good tidings on the subject most engrossing her thoughts, — that little so affected her, that she could not keep her eyes, for a single moment, from the fond task of peering along the leafy vistas to catch the first glimpse of Pony's head. After a while, however, she drew forth the army-list from her bosom, and for a few moments it divided her attention with the anxious lookout. She ran over the list about the twentieth time since it had been in her possession, to see if she could find on it any name bearing resemblance to her

lover's. Although there was no such name as King to be found — as has already been said — there were several Charleses; and, as Carlos is the Spanish of Charles, she inspected these closely, one by one, to ascertain whether or not any of them had a family name bearing even the remotest resemblance to his. But there was none.

She next looked wistfully at the name of John Gatley, as though she hoped to find in that something, which, if assumed as a disguise, her lover might have left as a clue to his original name, to the end that she, at least, if no one else, might be enabled to unravel it. But there was nothing of the kind to be seen.

"Only one letter of Charles in the first name," she murmured in a very low tone, — "and not even a trace of King in the last. It cannot, then, be Carlos: he would n't have had the cruelty to blot out his name so completely, that I may thus read it over and over, and yet never know it from that of a stranger."

Despite these dreary words, however, — which showed how much she despaired of the girl bringing her any good news, — her anxiety for the latter's arrival, so far from diminishing, seemed to grow as the minutes went by, — until, at last, either because she thought that the shifting of her situation and the consequent change in her surroundings, might tend to relieve her suspense a trifle, or for the purpose of getting where she could see, a little sooner, whatever of good or ill might be in store for her, she left the house and strolled along the path she had been so intently watching. After going some distance, she sat down at the root of a tree, on the dead, dry leaves of the last year's growth, and with ears attent, listened for the sound of the horse's feet, which she knew must herald Filly's approach, — for there, where the woods were dense, and the path — as all by-paths are — tortuous, the ear could distinguish much farther than the eye.

In a few minutes, she heard the long wished-for sound,—and with it her heart set to throbbing as though it would burst its bounds. In a little while more, Filly, on the pony, emerged into view around a turn in the path; and with the same glance, the anxious watcher saw at the girl's side, and recognized him on the instant, her long-sought lover. As she was a little distance off the path along which they were coming, they did not see her, until, rising suddenly from her position and starting forward, she gave a faint scream, and sank down at once on the earth, quite unconscious.

This sudden joy, after long years of separation, intensified as it was by its contrast with the intermediate suspense and suffering, and at length despair, had proved too much for a highly impressible system, sensitive alike to all the extremes of emotion. How strange, at times, is the womanly nature! We may readily understand that, when woe, or terror, or utter despair comes on one of the gentler sex, she should close her sight against them all in the transient death of a swoon. But strange it is, that, when so near the goal of her one, life-long hope,—out of which all other hopes are born, and around which, after their birth, they all revolve like lesser stars, living by it, and through it, and for it alone,—full strange it is, that she should *then* draw down the curtain of her eyes and shut out the joyous sight: nay—that she should glide off into a dark, dreary, unexplored realm, nor take with her so much as a thought, or a memory, or a dream, of what is, or was, or is to be!

King, hastening his steps, was soon with her. Throwing himself on the ground close by her side in a half recumbent posture, he leaned over her, looking fondly in her death-pale face—watching for the first opening of her eyes. Now and then, he pressed his lips to hers, as though to confirm, by that exquisite prerogative of a lover, the

evidence of her presence, afraid to believe what his sight alone so plainly told him — that this was indeed no dream, which might, on waking, vanish into air, and leave him desolate again.

Filly, at first, stood by, marking, with intense interest, all that occurred. She had often read, in novels, of heroines fainting, and wondered how in the world they managed it so opportunely; and had quite as often come to the conclusion, that she herself would never make a heroine, in so far as it might depend in her going off in the style therein depicted. But it became an altogether different matter when she saw the genuine thing enacted here right before her face, — saw the workings of the causes which led to it, — the evident intensity of the emotions enlisted, together with the unmistakable suffering attendant upon the immediate act itself. Putting herself in Isabella's place, and "Señor" in King's, she thought it would be no very difficult feat to die off in pretty much the same way, should anything have occurred to make her believe, for three or four long years, that her lover was dead, and then should he come rushing, in this particular manner, to her arms.

"Oh, Carlos!" said the Señorita, in a low whisper, — which was, at that time, as loud as her faint breath could afford, — slowly opening her eyes and gazing for a moment full in his face, as though assuring herself that it was indeed her lover, — then closing them again with very exhaustion. He said nothing — did nothing beyond kissing her again — this time, with a more lingering pressure in the contact, because he knew that his previous kisses had been but wasted on unconscious lips, — and knew now that there was to be no more such wasting.

Up to this time, Filly had been looking on with the most artless simplicity, inspired solely by her sympathy

with the parties more immediately concerned. No sooner, however, did she see the *Señorita* open her eyes in evident consciousness of what was going on, than it struck her that she herself was hardly doing just the right thing in lingering here. Not having, as a guide in such matters, the force of education and habit, which would have made her shrink at once from longer witnessing so tender a scene, she had to resort again to her usual circuitous test, of putting herself in the *Señorita's* place.

"The bare idea," she thought at last, "of any one standing by and looking on when *Señor* had me in his arms, any time after my childhood."

Then, as if to make the impression stronger on her own mind, she recalled that particular instance given in a previous chapter, where they had their last meeting in the woods, — when, after making her weep with words unintentionally cruel, he pacified her with fond caresses and sought to make, in some sort, amends for his broken faith, by deceptive promises.

As soon as she saw the impropriety of lingering here as a third party in a sort of matter that is always so much better for having but two, she turned away to the house — the pony, which, in the excitement, she had released, having already moved leisurely on in that direction, so far as to be quite out of sight.

Now, while Filly was undoubtedly right about this, and while it was very considerate in her to get out of the way on so delicate an occasion, yet it must be owned that her presence was not felt by the lovers to be, in the least, embarrassing, — and this, for the very good reason that they did not once think of her, nor indeed of anybody else in all the wide world, but their own two dear selves. The girl had therefore little difficulty in getting away unnoticed, and none the less that she glided stealthily off on tiptoe, as

though apprehensive that her footfall in the rustling, dry leaves might attract their attention. Ah! she did not know that each was so filled with the other, that even a small earthquake might have "reeled unheededly away."

CHAPTER XXXI.

I am a man whom fortune hath cruelly scratched.

All 's Well That Ends Well.

ISABELLA soon opened her eyes again. Her lover had already taken her head on his lap, and was now smoothing out her dishevelled hair, and gently stroking her blue-veined temple, and her rounded cheek, into which the blood was flooding fast back. As yet, they said but little: and why should they? Surely, words were worse than useless while their conscious eyes were exchanging such eloquent looks. To see each other — touch each other — was enough: the tongue could have added no joy to this — at least, until the appetite of sight and touch — so sharply set by long separation — should be somewhat appeased.

At length, quite rallying, the Señorita rose partly from the ground, and seating herself by her lover's side on the mossy roots, leaned back against the tree, while his arm encircled her tenderly about. Then, as a matter of course, came divers fond words and caresses — of which it is by no means certain the reader has any right to know the particulars, and which, at any rate, it were more discreet to withhold, — for should he be one of the warm-blooded sort, the detailing of such endearments might excite his envy — if one of the cold-blooded, his disgust. Suffice it to say, in general terms, that, given the kind of lovers, all wooing —

which is really heart-felt, and not based on gold, or blood, or station — goes on in much the same old familiar style, whether amid the rude environments of the wilderness, or the luxurious refinements of cities — except that it may be, as regards outward appearances, a trifle more under restraint in the latter situation than where everything around encourages the more natural procedure.

This brief foretaste over, of the heaven they had long ago limned forth for themselves, they began gradually to talk about what had happened to them since their parting at Queretaro. These preliminary allusions to that eventful period of their lives, led soon to a request on the part of the Señorita that her lover should give her a connected account of his escape, and of his subsequent career.

“It was a hard journey — that thousand miles,” he said, sadly, heaving a deep sigh at the thought of it, — “but what will a man not do for his liberty, — particularly with the terrors of such a dungeon as mine constantly pursuing him? I could, of course, move only by night; and many wretched nights did I pass, often hungry and cold, and, before I reached my journey’s end, well-nigh naked, and quite defenceless against the pelting storm. But when made almost desperate by such suffering, as I often was, I could at any time stimulate myself to renewed exertion by reflecting that such nights of torture, bad as they were, sank into nothing in comparison with the night of that prison to which I should be remanded — or to one as hideous — if captured again.

“In trying to keep to the most unfrequented ways, I became bewildered, and at length hopelessly lost, on the barren plains of Coahuila. Up to this time, I had subsisted myself with great difficulty by begging at the hovels of the lowest classes of the country, who I knew were

themselves so cruelly oppressed by the Gachupins that they would not be likely to betray me, — and glad enough was I to get a share even of their miserable food. But it was infinitely worse for me on those fearful plains; for not only were there no habitations there, of any kind, but both animal and vegetable life was so rare a thing, that I was soon on the very verge of starvation.

“At length, after many days of torture, I lay down to die by the bank of a little river that made its way through barren sands. I had lain there but a short time, however, when an unoccupied canoe came floating past me. With the exception of your own appearance before my grate in Queretaro, this was the most providential-looking object I ever beheld. It had most probably got loose from some of the savage tribes who roamed the more favored upland, many miles away. Putting forth all my strength, I plunged into the stream, and struck out to overtake it; but in my enfeebled condition it gained so rapidly on me, that I grew desperate, gave up the pursuit, and was led to consider whether I should make for the shore again, to die there a lingering death, or seek a more speedy relief by sinking beneath the wave. Just then the canoe ran on a little island, only a few feet in extent, where it lodged — bow on — swayed to and fro by the current. I exerted myself once more; but just as I was about to grasp the prize, the wave which my own motion had pushed before me, struck the stern, and whirling it around, cleared it of the island. Once more I abandoned the attempt, — for the stream from this point was very rapid, and I knew I could not overtake the canoe when once fairly in the current. But to my joy, the eddy which played below the island was strong enough to draw it within its vortex, and it was while whirling around in this little circuit that I rushed forward and boarded it.

“I found nothing in the canoe but a paddle and a single ear of corn. On this slender stock of provisions, grain by grain, I kept myself alive, while I used the paddle with what strength I had remaining, to keep the canoe in the current. My object was to move onward as rapidly as possible, trusting to chance to bring me into a fertile region, or perhaps to the Gulf, where some friendly sail might possibly be found to bear me away. I stopped neither night nor day. When overcome by drowsiness, I would lay the paddle aside and sink down in sleep, allowing the current still to carry me on.

“On the second day, when my last grain of corn had been eaten, I succeeded in catching a lizard, which I devoured raw. On the third day a turtle shared the same fate and served the same purpose. Just before the fourth night closed in, I fancied I could see some slight signs of a stinted vegetation in the distance. Hoping, as I did, that the next dawn would find me in a more favored section, when it came, in order to realize that hope, I strained my eyes with an anxiety to which that felt by Columbus when he expected the break of day would show him a new world must have been slight in comparison,—for should I be disappointed in this, the close of that day would probably show me a new world indeed, and one for which I felt but ill prepared.

“During the glimmering twilight of that morning,—which in that latitude must have lasted only a few minutes, but which seemed to me as many hours,—I saw, or imagined I saw, clumps of trees looming up between me and the dim horizon; and it was but a single step further to fancy homes embowered within them. And it was even so. Soon I could distinguish the tinkling of bells, and in a few minutes more could see flocks dotting the country over, as they went slowly forth to their early

browsing. Cocks began to crow. Dogs to bark. Cattle to low. On sight of the first smoke curling upward from a lowly cot, telling that the inmates were stirring, I leaped ashore, and made my way thither by dragging myself along on the earth — for by this time I was too near starvation to walk. They gave me food, and took care of me until I was strong enough to start forth again. They had told me I was almost within sight of the Gulf, but that there were no ports on this part of the coast, and of course there could be no ships in which I might hope to escape. I therefore set out again by land — as before, daring to move only by night.

“I had almost reached the borders of Texas, when, darkling along a mountain-path — for I was now in a wild and craggy country—by a few steps in the wrong direction, I fell over a precipice into the road beneath. The fall broke one of my legs, and of course I could not stir. Unfortunately for me, a detachment of Spanish soldiers were the first who passed along. The commanding officer at once recognized me as one of Nolan’s men. He said he had seen us six years before as we passed through one of the neighboring towns on our way to prison. Mangled as I was, the officer had the heartlessness to order me to be placed on a horse behind one of their number; and thus, with my shattered limb dangling by the animal’s side, while the ends of the broken bone grated together at every step, they conveyed me to the nearest village. There I was kept under strict guard, and when able to walk was marched to Monclova, where, for a year, I languished in a cell only a degree less hideous than that of Queretaro.

“With a knife-blade, which I found in a mound of filth that had accumulated during the occupancy of some unfortunate before me, I tunnelled a way beneath the walls after six months’ labor. Through this hole I escaped —

and then made my way eastward. I soon reached the Rio Grande, and crossed into Texas. The next day, I was captured by a band of Comanches. From them I had little right to expect mercy, for I had often met their brethren in deadly conflict on the prairies. But these heathen savages showed themselves far more merciful than their proud neighbors had done, with all their vaunted Christianity. They not only fed me plentifully with the best they had, but gave me a blanket to cover my nakedness, and moccasins for my bleeding feet — then supplied me with food for the remainder of my journey, and sent me on my way rejoicing.

“At last I reached the eastern bank of the Sabine. Here I encountered two of the men of the Neutral Ground, who, seeing my forlorn condition, conducted me to their camp, where their Chief, Captain Gatewood — I shall always remember him with gratitude — bade me —

“My God! Isabella, why do you look so pale? You have not recovered from the effects of your swoon. Lie down at once, or you will faint again.”

At the sound of his name with whom she had so lately entangled herself in a loveless betrothal, her playing blushes checked at once, and left her cheek wan indeed. The simple truth is, since she caught sight of the only man she had ever loved in all the world, not a single thought of the other had crossed her mind. She was so absorbed in gazing on this one — listening to his voice, and thrilling and blushing beneath his ardent embraces, that she had as completely forgotten the grim Chieftain of Neutralia as though she had never seen him, or he had never existed.

“Yes — I *do* feel a faintness coming over me again,” she said, leaning her head on his breast and hiding her face with her hands — ashamed that he should see it. “I don’t need to lie down though: let me but rest here awhile, and it will soon pass off.”

CHAPTER XXXII.

Who but a damned one could have done like me?

TAILOR.

Blame not this haste of mine : if you mean well,

Now go with me and with this holy man

Into the chantry by.

Twelfth Night.

A rusted nail plac'd near the faithful compass

May sway it from the truth and wreck the argosy.

The Crusade.

DURING the brief time the Señorita remained in the position she had assumed at the close of the last chapter, she gave a hurried glance into the abyss, which — known full well, but forgotten for an hour — had been as suddenly revealed to her by her lover's words, as is the fearful chasm to the benighted mountaineer by a flash from heaven.

For love's sake alone, she thought it would, beyond doubt, be better — infinitely better — to make a clean breast of it, and tell him all about that other betrothal, and how it came, — and then throw herself on his mercy to forgive the deed. But, for her country's sake this would never do: she must delude both her lovers now instead of one, as heretofore, — and bide a more auspicious time. If she should embrace freedom now, she would lose love, — if she should embrace love, she would lose freedom. She must wait until both could be hers at once.

"There, now," she said, raising her head from his breast; "I feel better: go on."

"For many weeks I lay ill in camp, where I was known

as John Gatley — having assumed that name after I escaped from Monclova. And if it had not been for this sweet girl — Why,” he said, looking around, “where has she gone? I thought she was with us — or rather, I should have thought so, if I had not forgotten all about her. Well, she nursed me so faithfully, that I have no doubt she saved my life.

“And what do you think I did next, Isabella?”

“I suppose you sought your home, of course.”

“No — I sought yours.”

“You surely did n’t venture to San Antonio?”

“Yes — I did. Captain Gatewood very kindly gave me a horse, — thinking, quite naturally, that I wished to go to the United States, — and I did not choose to undeceive him. Disguising myself, I took my way westward, resolved to see you again, if possible, and to atone for all our sufferings by wedding you at once, and taking you to my own country — if you would go — where we might spend the rest of our days in peace.

“On my arrival in San Antonio, without making myself known, I entered into casual conversation with different citizens of the place, and ascertained from them that you had been sent to New Orleans to school. I started off again, and after a ride of nearly a thousand miles, all alone, reached that city. There I set myself about finding you. After a long search I had the good fortune to meet with one of your countrymen — a priest from San Antonio — but the exceeding bad fortune to hear from him that you had sailed, a few days before, for Vera Cruz, on your way to the city of Mexico, to spend the winter with an aunt. He told me your friends had advised this change, hoping it would restore your health, which he represented as failing fast.

“You may conceive how sad was this disappointment,

after all my wanderings in search of you, — which were now necessarily brought to an end, — for, of course, I had not the madness to venture to the capital. I then returned to my native State, and rested for nearly a year. About six months ago, I started out again to look for you. I came as far as New Orleans, intending to make my way to San Antonio on horseback — in disguise, of course. Hearing that Colonel Magee was then in the city in search of volunteers for the patriot army of Mexico, I was not long in making up my mind to join his standard, — since it would not only give me the opportunity of fighting for your native province, — but it was the only way I could reasonably hope ever to see you again. Thus it is that I am with you now.”

The Señorita then related her adventures. But as the reader is already acquainted with them, there is no need of repeating them here. Suffice it to say, that she dwelt particularly on the unceasing torture she had endured from the suspense of not knowing anything whatever of his fate. With all her details, however, she told him nothing about her relations with Gatewood — not even that he had rescued her and her friends from the clutches of the Spaniards. In a word, she never once named him in her narration.

“Now, Isabella,” said her lover, when she had finished, “since we have had such bitter experience in the way of long separations, and as the future is to us so very uncertain, that, if we part now, we may never meet again, I suggest that you go on to Nacogdoches in the rear of our army, — with myself as your escort. I understand the forces will be delayed there about two months, awaiting supplies. As soon as we arrive, we will go to the Padre of the place, who will make us man and wife. Are you willing to do so?”

As she did not immediately answer this very direct proposal, he went on, in a few moments, to give the whys and wherefores, — not only to relieve the very awkward pause, but because he thought it nothing more than fair that she should have a little time to consider, — and, moreover, that she had the right to know the grounds on which he based his overtures for such a speedy union.

“You will thus get out of this unpeopled wilderness and back to your native province, under the very natural protection of your lover. We will spend two happy months of married life in Nacogdoches, which, as you know, is the second town in Texas, where there is much refined society, and where nearly every citizen is a friend of liberty and hostile to the Gachupins. Then, when the army leaves, you can await there the result of its operations westward. If it should succeed in expelling the foe from Texas, we can go and live, if you prefer it, at your beautiful home near San Antonio. On the other hand, should the campaign prove disastrous, I will, if I survive it, return through Nacogdoches, and take you with me to my own more peaceful home in my native State.”

To two fond lovers, eager to be made one, what could have appeared more reasonable than such a proposition? And the truth is, if the Señorita had had no little by-play to this life-drama, which she wished to be acted on the other side of the curtain from him, this proposition would have seemed to her the most natural one in the world, and she would not have had to think twice before adopting it. And yet, instead of accepting it at once, as he thought she possibly would, — or modestly hesitating a moment, and then assenting gracefully, with perhaps a charming blush, as he thought most probable, — she did what he would have considered — had such a result previously suggested itself to his mind at all — neither probable nor possible: first,

looked as one taken wholly by surprise — then, casting her eyes on the ground, mused for a while dejectedly, and when she essayed to speak, stammered — broke down — then tried again — and at last (he could scarcely believe his ears that heard the stunning words) said she would prefer postponing their marriage until the war should be quite ended — which they both knew might not be for years.

King was as much hurt, as he was astonished by this answer. After all these mutual avowals of love — after all that torturing suspense — that wringing of their hearts for each other's sake — to be thus brought together once more by the merest freak of fate, and *then* for his beloved to reject an honorable wedlock, and to prefer parting again, perhaps forever! He thought it not only strange, but hard — indeed, at the moment, almost heartless. And such thoughts could, in a measure, be read in his face in lines of reproachful sadness, as he glanced at her. He, however, never once suspected double-dealing. He only looked upon this hesitation as proof of the melancholy fact that she did not love with half his own fervor.

She was not slow to read the distressed expression which swept his handsome features; and — to do her justice — it cut her to the very heart. She felt, at that moment of agony, that she could cast her country's present prospects to the winds and await a more auspicious moment for its redemption, that she might remove by marriage all doubt from that faithful breast — all trace of pain from the noble face before her.

After another brief but terrible struggle as to whether she should still tell him all about her transactions with Gatewood and the cause of them, leaving him to dictate what course would then be best; or whether, without making this explanation, she should marry him and remain where she was until the war was over, or go with him as he

had suggested; or whether she should do neither of these things, but let matters stand just as they were at present, she found it so difficult to decide which course to pursue, that she resolved to hold her decision, for a little while, in reserve, if she could manage so to arrange things. With this view she asked him:

“Carlos, you will surely stay here with us, for a few days — at least?”

“It is impossible,” he answered. “I must hasten to re-join my comrades: they have no idea where I am. In my wild haste to meet you I left the ranks without saying a word to any one, and they will think me a deserter, unless I return soon — for I am an entire stranger to them, having caught up with them only yesterday. They are to encamp about ten miles from here to-night, and if I start soon I can reach them before the day closes.”

“But you can get a leave of absence, and return to me to-morrow? I will then be prepared to tell you exactly what I will do. I should like to have ample time to consider the subject: it is a very important one to me — more so perhaps than you think. And when you come, I will tell you why it is so important to me.”

She had been, all this while, taxing her ingenuity to the utmost, to think of something that might excuse, or at least extenuate, her indecision in this matter, — but she could not, for her life, summon up anything plausible that she could afford to tell: hence, this compromise proposal, to hold the subject under advisement. By to-morrow she would be able, she thought, to make up her mind, which was now so vacillating. If she should decide to marry him without further delay, all would be right. Should she decide to put him off for a while, why, she would assuredly be equal to the task of concocting some good reason by the time they should meet on the morrow.

"Well, I suppose it must be so," he said, sadly. "But, Isabella, I must tell you I have a presentiment just now, that if we part thus, we shall never see each other again. It may appear to you foolish — but I feel it nevertheless."

"Oh," she replied, with affected carelessness, though a shudder shot through her frame even as she uttered the words, "we must not allow our mere imagination to have too much sway in matters of such moment."

"Well, you may be right. I only hope you are. Good-bye, my love!"

They parted tenderly — with the understanding that he was to return the next evening, from the encampment where the little army was to rest until the second morning.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Alas! how love can trifle with itself.

Two Gentlemen of Verona.

If you think well to carry this, as you may, the doubleness of the benefit defends the deceit from reproof. What think you of it?

Measure for Measure.

FILLY, meanwhile, strolled on to the house, reflecting on the day's events, and nervously summing up the advantages which they would probably bring her for the amendment of her affairs, — fallen, of late, into such a sad plight; and it is scarcely necessary to say that she derived much hope from her reflections. She sought the room occupied by herself and the Señorita, and almost the first object which drew her attention on entering, was a letter lying open on the floor. Not only was the seal broken, but the sheet was quite unfolded. She picked it up, along with a

book and some newspapers that lay near it, with the view of putting them aside, for order's sake, — a very common thing with her, — she having gradually taken upon herself, since coming to live there, the business of arranging the room, whenever the Señorita in her abstracted moods — which, of late, were frequent — would leave things strewn about.

A letter being by no means an every-day affair in that wild region, Filly could not help glancing at the handwriting. That single glance sufficed to bring about events that colored the rest of her days. It was a letter from Gatewood, and the girl instantly recognized it as such. Nor was she long in finding that it was addressed to the Señorita.

Considering how long Filly had been kept on the rack by her ignorance of the exact condition of affairs between "Señor" and Isabella, as well as the few moral advantages she had enjoyed, — living, as she had done, ever since the first dawn of her reason, where honor, if not daily murdered outright, was at least constantly besmirched by some questionable act on the part of those around her, — it is probably not much to be wondered, that she dived into the contents of this letter with an eagerness which she had seldom, or perhaps never, before felt. So absorbed, indeed, was she in the act, that she did not move a jot from her position until she had read every word of it.

The letter was as follows:

SALITRE PRAIRIE,
West Bank of the Sabine.

MY DEAREST ISABELLA: As I have a chance to send a letter to Natchitoches, I will write you and enclose to a friend, who always sees Miguel when he goes to town for the news, and will of course hand it to him for you.

We came within sight of this point yesterday, and immediately attacked the Spanish force stationed here. After a

running fight of about an hour, we drove them entirely off, with a loss on our part of two killed and three wounded. We leave early to-morrow for Nacogdoches — so I have not much time to write. We are all in fine spirits and confident of worsting the Gachupins as soon as we can come up with them. I feel my sympathies enlisted more and more every day in the cause which you have so well taught me to espouse. But how could it be otherwise? Am I not all your own? What is nearest your heart is also nearest mine, — and it must be so henceforth and for all time. I often recall the many delightful hours we have spent together on the lake and in the wood. I often recall — so vividly too that I realize in the fond vision half the bliss they gave me at the time — those burning kisses and tender embraces. Oh, how they thrill me, and inspire me anew with devotion to the cause which is *yours*! I must live in the mere memory of them — such is the soldier's fate — until our promised marriage shall make sweet realities of them all. Then liberty and love shall go hand in hand, with nothing to intrude on our paradise — for, as I pledged you, I will then quit forever the wild life I have been leading, and we will dwell together in happiness the remainder of our days.

My duties claim my attention now, dearest, and I have no time to write more — or I could fill pages with my love for you, and in anticipating the happier days that await us when the war is over. I will send a letter whenever I can, though the opportunities will be so very rare that you must not be disappointed, nor think me remiss if you get none at all. In a year or two, however, or perhaps sooner, I have no doubt I shall be able to return to the lake in person and bring you away as my bride, to look again on your beautiful Texas — more beautiful than ever then, that she too will be tricked out in her new bridal robes, as the spouse of liberty.

It will be useless to ask you to write — much as I should like to hear — for after we leave here we place a wilderness between ourselves and you — so that there will be few facilities, if any, for sending a letter either way. But I *will* ask you to think of me often — and not forget me even in your dreams!

Your devoted lover,

GATEWOOD.

While it is needless to say that the perusal of this letter caused Filly much pain, she found comfort in the belief that all the love therein expressed for another would now be transferred back to herself, where she thought it rightfully belonged. Therefore, although the well-nigh unmixed joy, which she had felt but a few moments before, was alloyed no little by this actual sight of Gatewood's ardent words of love written to her rival, her relief, on the whole, was so great from the agony of the last few weeks, — when she thought herself altogether deserted by him, and left without a single hope of regaining him, — that she felt much reason for self-gratulation on the day's results.

Being a good deal worn-out by the excitement of the afternoon, which had kept her feelings so long on the stretch, after laying the letter carefully away, she threw herself on the bed and was soon asleep.

For some time after Isabella's lover bade her adieu, she kept her position at the foot of the tree where they had been conversing. She watched his retiring form until completely hidden from her view by the foliage, through which he made his way with rapid strides, — for, that he might the sooner rejoin his comrades, instead of taking the path by which he had come, he struck off through the trackless woods in a more direct course. No sooner had his figure vanished, the sound of his steps died away, and the agitated boughs, just at the point where he had dashed them aside and disappeared behind them, ceased waving, and left no sign of him whatever, than she felt such a sense of lonesome come over her as she had hoped never to feel again.

"He is gone!" she exclaimed, throwing herself prostrate among the leaves.

These were all the words she spoke, — but her thoughts, so far from stopping, continued to sweep through her brain like a flood of fire.

“Oh, how fearfully am I swayed between those two darling objects of my life — my poor country’s freedom and my poor heart’s love. But there shall be a speedy end of this painful trifling: I can endure it no longer. When he comes, to-morrow, I will tell him that I will marry him at once, — and so settle this matter forever. Ah! why did I hesitate? — it seems so strange *now* that I did. I little dreamed how desolate I should feel when he was gone, or I had not done it. His noble heart was wounded at my vacillation; and no wonder, surely, after such suffering in the past, — and such prospect of suffering to come, in the dangers and hardships of battle. Would I could call him back now — this very moment open my breast to him — tell him how I have deceived him — and why — and then ask his forgiveness — make him mine for life! Oh, that I could! One day seems so long now to wait for his return. Yes, one brief day seems long — though I *have* waited through the agony of years. And have I only waited for *this*, at last — to hurt his kindly heart? To-morrow shall atone for all.”

This, one might think, looks enough like decision: but it was not. It was only one of those impulsive outbursts which had often overcome, for a time, the passionate nature of Isabella Delgado, in some degree throughout her life, — but more especially during her sojourn in the Neutral Ground: in other words, since the trying alternative of a choice between love and patriotism had swerved her from the spotless sincerity of her early youth. By the time she had risen from the ground and was slowly making her way towards the house, her mind was already beginning to undergo a change. ●

"But were I to do this, and Captain Gatewood to hear of it, as he most probably would, it would cause him to withdraw at once from the field, and so, dash the only hope we have for Texas, now so near her freedom, if he but remains her champion. He might even do worse: on the discovery of such a gross deception practised upon him — treachery it may well be called, unless I undeceive him before taking this step, and tell him candidly how it is, that I have met with my own true lover, long thought dead — his fierce temper might even impel him to espouse the opposite side. And, surely, *I* could not blame him, knowing as I do full well that his feelings are only conditionally enlisted in our cause. He has been entrapped solely by these silken bands of my weaving. If I sever them by marrying another, there will be nothing left him but to turn on us in pitiless revenge. No: I will let things remain as they are, and when the war is over, make my choice between them — a choice that is already made in my heart, and can never be changed. The Chief may fall in battle, and in that case there will be no choice to make. But what if he survive, Carlos be slain, and the tyrants win? Ah! far better for me both should fall — for then the convent becomes my haven of rest."

As was perhaps not altogether unnatural, these conflicting thoughts ended, at length, in a resolution to adopt a medium course — that King, when he should come the next day, should be told, without concealment or reserve, about the matter, from beginning to end, — the question of their marriage to be left entirely to his decision. It was a terrible struggle, in which her olden candor triumphed.

The Señorita's entrance into the room woke Filly, and she started up.

"Where's Mr. John?" she asked.

"He's gone, Filly."

"Not for good?"

"No — he left his command without getting permission, and so had to return as soon as he could. He promised to come again to-morrow evening."

The Señorita took a seat by the open window, while her companion lay down again on the bed. They both seemed to glide off into reverie.

"Filly," Isabella at length said, "I'm going to tell you my secret — at least a part of it. I believe I can trust you to keep it; and, then, it seems so hard to stay here in the wilderness and not share such precious thoughts with some one; besides, if it had not been for you, I should not have found my lover. In truth, if it had not been for you, he says he should have been dead long ago. So, there will be a peculiar fitness as well as a pleasure in telling you about it. 'My lover,' did I say, just now? Why, then, you already know my secret."

"Oh, you must not think me so dull, Señorita, that I did n't guess that much as long ago as yesterday."

"So you well might. But, at best, it was only a guess *then*, Filly — now, you *know* it.

"But, Filly," she added, after a pause, "you must have tarried but a very short time where we were. We looked around for you, after talking a little while, and you could n't be found."

"After talking a little while, indeed! Why, as soon as you opened your eyes, and — well, as soon as I saw how things were likely to go, I left you, — of course I did."

"That was very considerate in you," replied the Señorita, with a faint smile and a very evident blush.

She now told the girl a good deal about her love-affairs, with which the reader is supposed to be already familiar.

"I reckon you will be married now — as you have been separated so long?" said Filly, with her usual direct simplicity, as soon as the other had finished her story.

This was an important question to her who propounded it—an *all-important* one. In fact, she would rather, by far, have had it answered than to have heard all the long story that had just been told her, as much as this interested her.

The Señorita, so far from taking umbrage at this rather plain inquiry into the state of her affairs, seemed pleased at the interest manifested in them, and answered without the least hesitation:

“Well, that’s a question we did not fully decide. I shall leave it entirely to Carlos when he comes.”

Here the colloquy closed, for the present, and they both lapsed again into the meditative mood. For this, the time was peculiarly favorable—the shadows of twilight were closing fast around them. That hour,

“When Meditation bids us feel

We once have lov’d, though love is at an end,”

is also singularly fitted for dwelling on such a love as theirs, which has not yet ended, nor is likely to end but with life.

The longer Isabella revolved in her mind the last resolution she had formed, the more did it impress her as being the right course to pursue,—in truth, the only course she *could* pursue; and no great while elapsed before she began to marvel that she had ever thought of doing anything else. So that, in the end, her summing up was, “He shall know all about it to-morrow, and then I will do whatever he says.”

“To-morrow!” Ah! that treacherous word!—who can foreknow what it has in store?

As to Filly, many allowances are to be made for her musings on this occasion—her reasonings—the conclusions she arrived at—her determination as to her course

of action in this critical matter: for she had long since resolved on action, energetic action too, if an opportunity should ever present to reclaim her faithless lover. Her comparative ignorance of the world's ways — its sentimentalities — its thousand little refinements of thought and feeling — must be constantly borne in mind. Indeed, these considerations must by no means be lost sight of during the perusal of many other of these pages: else, her conduct at times may well strike the reader as improbable.

“If they would only marry,” she thought, “that would end my agony. For no one but this beautiful charmer could ever have taken him from me in the first place; and, once married, of course, she will lose all her charms for him,—and then he would come back to me. But if they decide not to marry now, many things may happen to prevent it, and dash my hopes again. Mr. John may be killed: and then Señor will be hers, with no kind of doubt. Or, both may come back from the war: in that case there will be a duel, and if there is, Señor will be certain to kill him,—for there's no better shot and fencer in the world,—and then he'll marry her. All she says about her devotion to Mr. John may be true, but it's not the *whole* truth, for he's not very much handsomer than Señor, and then he's not near so agreeable,—and I know she must love Señor just as much — probably a great deal more. Why, don't that letter show it? Would she allow him to kiss and hug her, as he says there he did, unless she loved him devotedly? And even now, when Mr. John has been found, I can't think she is willing to give Señor up altogether. I only wish I *could* think so. No — no — she wants to keep two strings to her bow, as they say. She will wait till the war's over, so that, if one should be killed, she can marry the other. I could n't do so, but it's sometimes done in the novels, and I suppose in the world too. Oh, if they would only marry!

“Suppose I were to go to Mr. John and tell him plainly that Señor and myself were just on the eve of being married when the Señorita came and stole him from me. Would there be any harm in that? Suppose I were to tell him how wretched I am, and how much more wretched I shall be if Señor never loves me again. It might touch his heart,—for he has a kind heart,—and he says I saved his life once; and if I did, I’m sure he might pity me enough to do what would give me back my happiness. The Señorita says she is going to leave to him the question of their marriage. Now, if I can only — Ah, that letter! — it is the very thing: *that* will tell him all. I’ll just hand it to him, and when he reads it — if he loves her as I think he does — he will certainly insist on their being married at once,—for he will then see that, if he puts it off, he may lose her altogether.

“Would it be wrong to do this? Would I be doing injustice to anybody? I can’t see that I would. As to Mr. John, it would surely be doing him a favor, rather than a wrong. As to the Señorita, she has been very kind to me, and I’m very grateful to her for it. But is it reasonable that just because one lover might be killed in the war, she should be allowed to keep two engaged to her, when one of them is *mine*, and when all the happiness I ever expect to have, depends on his being restored to me? My gratitude will go very far, I believe; but justice to myself forbids any such stretch as that. Then, there is Señor: would it be treating *him* badly? I can’t think so. He had no business to make me love him so — and then to leave me. To be sure, he saved my life — at least saved me from a life that was a thousand times worse than death. But does that give him a right to break my heart?”

CHAPTER XXXIV.

There is that in this fardel will make him scratch his beard.

Winter's Tale.

I have *tremor cordis* on me: — my heart dances,

But not for joy, — not joy.

Winter's Tale.

NEXT morning, soon after breakfast — the Señorita having gone to stroll on the beach, that she might ruminate, alone, on the new prospects opening to her mental view, so wholly unexpected but one short day before — Filly, with the design of reviewing and perfecting her plan of the previous night, drew forth the Captain's love-letter from the nook where she had concealed it, and read it over a second time.

Besides placing this missive in King's possession, she now resolved that, instead of trusting her tongue to explain to him the further particulars of this delicate matter, she would write what she had to say — this being, she thought, a much less embarrassing and painful mode of imparting tidings which were unpleasant, but at the same time essential to be known. She accordingly procured writing-materials and indited the following letter:

DEAR MR. JOHN: I enclose you a letter which I found lying wide open in our room (the Señorita's and mine) yesterday after you left. It speaks for itself, as far as it goes — but it don't go quite far enough to speak for me — so I shall have to say a few words.

Captain Gatewood and myself were engaged to be married — but the very day before our marriage was to take place, he rescued the Señorita, and her uncle and brother, from the Spaniards who had captured them and were taking them back to

Texas as prisoners. From that moment — now nearly a year ago — I've never once seen him or heard a word from him — the enclosed will tell you plainly enough *why*.

It went very hard with me from the first, Mr. John, — and as the days go by, it seems still harder to bear. I told you, as you may remember, that a gentleman who had built by the lake had offered her his house to live in — but I didn't choose to tell you *then* who the gentleman was. Well, it was Captain Gatewood. He had that very house (the one I am in now) built and furnished for me to live there with him as his wife. He took me to the lake before he commenced building it, that I might choose the spot, and after it was finished he bought everything I wanted to furnish it with. We were to go to the priest next day in Natchitoches, and after being married, were to live here at the lake — but that was the day he met with *her*. I was sent from the camp to Natchitoches and never saw him afterward.

I can't recover from the blow. I've been crushed ever since. But I don't blame the Señorita for it. She didn't know we were engaged, and don't know it now, nor even suspect a word of such a thing. For my sake as well as your own I hope you'll not go off to the war without making her your wife — for if you do, and you and Captain G. both come back alive, believe me, sir, he will not give her up to you without a duel. If he kills you, you will go to your grave, while he will marry her — and I'm not sure *that* will not send me to mine. If you kill him, you may as well have fired the same bullet through my heart too — for it would n't kill me any sooner in that way than by being fired through his.

Oh! Mr. John, she loves you dearly — I know she does. Why then can't you marry her at once, and put an end to all this suffering?

Your true friend, FILLY.

Scarcely had the girl finished her letter, when, on looking out the window fronting the lake, she saw the Señorita leisurely making her way back to the house. It was but the work of a moment to fold her epistle, place the other within it, and direct the package to Mr. John Gatley.

Scarcely had she thrust it in her bosom, when Isabella entered the room.

"Señorita," the girl at once began, — partly, it may be, from impatience to execute her project, but mainly to hide her embarrassment on so narrowly escaping detection, — "I've taken a fancy for a ride this beautiful morning: do you feel in the same humor?"

"No, Filly," she replied, as the girl well knew she would, or the invitation had not been extended. Indeed, had she suspected any desire of the kind on the Señorita's part, she would have stolen off without letting her know she was going away at all — much less, whither. "No — Filly; I feel like passing the morning alone. I feel that this day is so closely interwoven with my destiny I can do nothing better than try to unravel the web."

"Unravel it — indeed! Don't you think, then, that Mr. John will come this evening, and unravel it for you?"

"I don't see what's to prevent his coming, and yet I cannot help thinking he may not. He told me, on parting, he had a presentiment that we should never see each other again."

"Oh, Señorita! — don't indulge in such horrid thoughts: cast them out, do. On the eve of your marriage, too, perhaps."

On hearing herself utter these last words, the smile which she had summoned to cheer her companion vanished instantly, her countenance fell, and she herself looked very like an object to be cheered; for those words had reminded her that *she* was once "on the eve of marriage" — but the marriage never came.

This sudden change, however, was not observed by the Señorita, who now threw herself on the bed, and said, with a deep sigh:

"Well — I'll make the effort, Filly. Go, take your ride."

This conversation stimulated the girl to hurry forward the execution of her plan. For, unsophisticated as she was, she thought all painful presentiments, and every other obstacle, imaginary or real, to the union of those two devoted hearts — to say nothing of the obstacles in her own way — must vanish like a morning mist before the presentation of those letters now in her bosom. With this new incentive to prompt action, she glided hurriedly from the room, and, summoning Miguel to caparison the pony, was soon on her way to the patriot camp.

The girl had intended inquiring for King, (under the name of Gatley, of course,) and after handing him the letters in person, to remain in his presence while he was reading them, that she might learn from his own lips their effect upon him, — or, if he should prefer silence on the subject, then to ascertain the result as best she might from his manner, or any other outward sign. While yet at a distance she had anticipated little or no embarrassment to herself from so doing; but on drawing near, quite an altered view of the matter was presented to her — particularly when she came to imagine herself facing him while he should be reading her own letter, exposing the sad state of her affairs. She even began to have misgivings as to whether she was acting altogether fairly or not. But as these misgivings were of a very vague sort, and as she was unable to assign any good reason for them, she was disposed to attribute them — coming upon her, as they did, only at the eleventh hour — to diffidence. And, in a measure, her judgment was correct.

The perhaps not very unnatural consequence of all this was, that, by the time she came within sight of the camp, she had resolved to give the package into the hands of some responsible person — in so far as she could judge him

to be such — ask him to deliver it to Gatley, and then make off, out of sight, and home with what speed she could. Before she fairly reached the camp — being as yet on the outskirts — she descried a tent pitched apart, larger and more showy than the rest — which indeed might well be, where none were either large or showy.

“That’s some officer’s tent,” thought she. “I’ll leave the letters with *him*.”

With this, she rode up to the rear of the tent, where she thought she would be less likely to be seen by any of the men — for, by this time, she had become quite ashamed of the boldness which had brought her here, and wished herself well clear of the place and of her embarrassments.

A gentlemanly person, who had no doubt heard the sound of the horse’s feet, lifted the rear tent-flap a little way and peeped out. On discovering that there was a lady in the case, he touched his cap, and, emerging, approached her side — evidently, from the expression of his face, very much astonished at *something*: and what was it, if not at seeing one of the gentle sex at such a place?

“Is Mr. Ki— I mean Mr. John — Gatley in camp?” she stammered forth, by this time blushing deeply.

“John Gatley? Yes — you’ll find him in a tent nearly fronting this one,” said the officer, (for such he was,) pointing in the direction he wished to indicate. “Or, if you prefer it, I will send for him. Just wait a moment.”

So saying, he turned about, with the view of carrying out his suggestion.

“Oh, no, sir,” said Filly, at once drawing forth the package. “I don’t wish particularly to see Mr. Gatley — but here is a letter for him: if you will only be kind enough to see that he gets it without delay, it is all I wish — and much obliged to you, sir.”

“By no means, I assure you,” said the officer, as he took

the package from her hand: "it will give me pleasure to hand it to him myself, at once."

Filly, bidding good morning, touched Pony with the whip and rode off.

CHAPTER XXXV.

I lov'd her dearly,
And when I do but think of her unkindness,
My thoughts are all in hell. HEYWOOD.

I have drank, and seen the spider.—*Winter's Tale.*

SCARCELY had the girl disappeared, when the officer started forth to make good his word. He found Isabella's lover alone in his tent. He was lying on his blanket with several newspapers scattered beside him. At that very moment, when the crushing blow was about descending upon him, he was musing of his betrothed, and fondly anticipating the joy which their appointed meeting, now so near at hand, would give him.

The officer left him alone again as soon as he had handed him the package. He unfolded it, and as Filly's letter was the outside one, and therefore first noted, he read it before he even glanced at the handwriting of the other. On perusing it, a feeling came over him that was by no means agreeable, though perhaps not more formidable than worry and dissatisfaction that Isabella had been so uncandid as to keep him in total ignorance of so much of what was here exposed as concerned herself. That Gatewood, or for the matter of that, any other man, should be smitten, even to desperation, with her charms, did not surprise him in the least. Nor did the fact that she continued to live in the house — which had no doubt been duly negotiated for by her uncle and brother,

as a temporary residence — seem to him at all strange, except in so far as the situation might be a dangerous one to any lady not sufficiently protected. That Gatewood, being deeply in love, should even venture to write to her, appeared but natural. In the girl's letter there was not a word to show that Isabella had ever given the Captain the least encouragement — so that, what little indignation — if it may be so called — King felt at his sweetheart's apparent want of candor in withholding from him the exact state of the affair, was entirely borne down and lost sight of by his sympathy with the poor, forsaken girl, who so simply depicted her own sufferings, and to whom, moreover, he owed his life. Glad enough, therefore, was he to find that his betrothed knew nothing whatever of Filly's engagement, since this ignorance released her from all blame — even supposing she was to blame, in the least particular, for merely treating with common politeness (which he, as yet, supposed was the entire extent of the case) a man to whom she had had the misfortune to be placed under obligation, first by mere accident, and then by her natural friends and protectors, and through no agency of her own.

As regarded any duel that he might hereafter find on his hands should he and Gatewood both survive the war, Filly, he thought, might not be far wrong about that. It would be by no means the first time that a man of Gatewood's fierce temper had, by reason of baffled passion, insisted on such miserable satisfaction as the duello affords. The prospect of such a fight, however, ruffled him but little, except that, to use the poor girl's words, "to kill the Captain would be like sending a bullet through her own heart."

King read the letter but once, and read it rapidly, — yet so quick are the operations of an acute mind when intensely engrossed, that he made (mentally, of course) all

the above comments on it during the brief time he was reading. So that, when he came to her earnest question at the end, "Why, then, can you not marry her at once, and put an end to all this suffering?" he answered it, in his heart, if not with his lips, "I don't know, Filly — but if I can, I most assuredly will."

It was with no apprehensions or misgivings as to its contents, that King took up the other letter; and whatever scruples he may at first have felt as to the propriety of reading it, were soon removed by the fact that it had been placed in his hands by one in whose honor he had good reason to confide, and who, in her own letter, had plainly told him that the welfare of more than one very dear to him depended on his perusing it. Inasmuch as the writer of it had been exceedingly kind to him during his sojourn at Camp Wildwood, — at a time when even a little kindness, as contrasting with the fearful treatment he had experienced for years at the hands of his fellow-men, could be so well appreciated, and stood him in so good stead, — he could not help saying, "Poor fellow!" as he cast his eye on the address, and thought how hopeless was the love of the brave man who penned it. This first compassionate impulse over, however, he felt, as he unfolded the letter, a touch of that contempt which we are apt to feel for one — be he ever so worthy — who hangs on long and hard to a beloved object, suing abjectly after every ray of hope is fled, and even after the fair one's scorn has withered him again and again — for he never doubted, for a single moment, that such was the case here. The greeting on the inside of the missive, however, somewhat startled him at first sight.

"'My dearest Isabella,' indeed!" he exclaimed. "The impudence of the fellow!"

By the time he had read a few lines, embracing mere

matters of fact, of general interest, he came to the conclusion that this was but a friendly letter.

"Oh, I see how it is," he thought. "She tolerates his writing friendly letters to her — perhaps even encourages him in it — that she may get the news in which she is so deeply interested; otherwise, she might not hear at all from the army. 'The cause which you have taught me so well to espouse.' That's quite natural: she is very enthusiastic, and wins over to the cause all who come in contact with her. That was no trifle, my Bella! Gatewood has nearly two hundred brave men under him. 'Am I not yours?' That is, her slave — ready to do her bidding. Verily, you are, wretched sir! 'What is nearest your heart is nearest mine, and it must be so henceforth and for all time.' Poor man! how deeply he must be in love! 'I often recall the many delightful hours we have spent together on the lake and in the woods.' The sweet siren! during those rambles she was only using her charms for her country's good. I hope she gave him no reason even to *think* she loved him: that would, indeed, have been cruel — unpardonable! Perhaps the next sentence will explain. 'I often recall — so vividly, too, that I realize, in the fond vision, half the bliss they gave me at the time — those burning kisses and tender embraces.'"

Carlos King was a strong man: his physique was a splendid one, or his skeleton had long since mouldered piecemeal in the dungeon of Queretaro, or had lain bleaching in the desert this side. His nerves were of the firmest — his thews almost as iron for strength and endurance. Though of gentle nature, he was a stranger to fear, and if need were to put forth his physical powers, there was not to be found of human mould a doughtier foe. Yet this man of almost god-like make succumbed, both in body and spirit, before that "paper bullet of the brain," like a stout warrior shot

through and through in battle. At that moment, and all in a moment, his fervent love and his darling hopes were alike crushed forever. For long years, he had fondly nursed them, like rare exotics, far away there in the innermost recesses of his desolate heart — its only garden-spot: fondly nursed them there, through years of storm, and blight, and canker, — allowing none to intrude upon them, nor to look in, nor even so much as know of their existence. To him they had all the fair outward seeming and tempting deliciousness of Dead Sea fruit, — and, like that, they crumbled now, just as he was reaching forth to cull them for the garnishing of his marriage-altar.

Turning on his face, just there where he lay, he uttered a half suppressed moan — his agony tenfold keener for that his immortal part, and not his body, had sustained the scath. After a few minutes, he leaped up and paced the tent with hurried, but such uncertain strides, that he soon staggered to a camp-chest. Sinking down upon it to a sitting posture, he bowed low his head and pressed between his hands his throbbing temples.

The first thing that came between him and the tortures of his sudden hell, was the sound of voices and laughter without, as from a passing group of rollicking men. These beat so jarringly on his ear and told him, in such plain terms, that this was no place for *him*, that he snatched up the letters — since they were not for mortal eye — and rushed away to the depths of the dim woods unseen.

When he had gone far enough to feel secure from intrusion, he flung himself on the ground, where he lay writhing, as though the snake that had stung him, along with its venom had imparted its own serpentine movements. Hours elapsed before he had any connected and definite thoughts as to his condition. To be sure, there was ever present to his mind a realization of some terrible calamity personal to

himself, — a constant, keen sense of havoc and ruin within, — but this chaos of his mental deep was as yet without form and void, and darkness was upon its face. For a while he was in much such a whirl as characterizes the acme of madness. And, as the exhaustion which succeeds the intense excitement of frenzy often induces slumber, long and profound, so was it in this case of transient madness.

As far as lying there alone on the cold, bare earth, the livelong night, was concerned, *that* was, comparatively, but a luxury to him who had so often lain pelted by the pitiless elements and howled at by hungry beasts. He did not wake until a late morning hour, — and a most sovereign balm this respite of unconsciousness had proved to his fevered brain.

It was, like the preceding one, a bright and beautiful day. The sunbeams came glinting aslant through the leafy openings: in unison with the breeze, they danced on his lids in their golden-slippered feet. His eyes opened to the touch of this gentle revelry, and let in the light even to the point of dazzling them and causing them to blink in their sudden pain. But with it all there came not a ray to the darkened *soul* that shuddered and crouched within. Nay — that outward sheen, by contrast, but deepened the inner gloom.

Yet for all this, the physical man was no longer unnerved. He now drew forth the fatal letter, confident of his strength to endure its contents and to read it through from beginning to end. As may be readily supposed, he dwelt not on the words, as before, but hurried through their torturing lines, as the luckless Indian captive runs the gauntlet. Every syllable buffeted his poor heart about, and more than once it was quite transfixed during the cruel race.

He found there an engagement of marriage, to be solemn-

nized when the war should close; a promise of reformation; fond anticipations of future happiness; the recalling of past sweets; the hoped realization of present musings; the frequent recurrence of "dearest;" the asking of the tender boon to be remembered and dreamed of—and all this from another, which should have been only from *him*. Yes—all this was there, and the strong man endured it without a tear, without a groan or sigh,—but yet not without such an inward struggle as none but his God could ever know.

King, with this new incentive to do so, had no difficulty whatever—as, indeed, few lovers have, with no incentive but true love itself to edge their memory—in recalling, even to the minutest details, his late interview with Isabella.

"No wonder *now*," he thought, "that she came so near swooning when I told her of my intimacy with Gatewood. She feared that when he and I should meet again during this campaign, there might come about a mutual exposition not the most favorable to her faithless scheme. No wonder now that she looked surprised when I proposed our speedy nuptials. No wonder she cast her eyes to the ground, instead of looking tenderly in my face, as she was wont in the olden time when the lightest word bearing upon love escaped my lips. No wonder she took a little holiday of thought before speaking, and when she did speak at last, faltered at her own lukewarm words. Yet never once did I doubt her love,—but only its intensity compared with my own; and even this I freely forgave, for it was then only a slight suspicion. Alas! it has become a dread reality. It is too plain now that all this was double-dealing. She wanted not less than two lovers at least; (and, indeed, for aught I know to the contrary, she may have a half-dozen more;) one, as a reserve, to bill and coo with in Venus' service, in case Mars should kill the other off."

His mind was fated, however, to undergo many fluctuations before coming to a final determination on a matter which had struck its tincture through and through his life. From the sarcastic tone of thought in which he had just indulged, a reaction of softer feeling came over him, and he fondly strove to believe she could not have been so deliberately heartless.

"She had, at one time," he went on speculating, "given me up as dead,—and surely not without good reason. What then if she, whiles, met with another who came *next* to me in her heart: could I blame her much for accepting him — thinking me forever lost to her? Ah! no — if she had but told me all, I could have forgiven her, with only a trace of all this pain: ay, in time, could have quite forgotten it. But to be engaged to one — not a stranger to me, but a man who, she knew, had once befriended me and placed me under lasting obligations — and not to breathe me a word of it all,—*that* could not have come from a mere misfortune: it was tenfold worse than a misfortune; it was perfidy — perfidy, too, of the blackest dye. 'Burning kisses' — 'tender embraces,' indeed? I too have enjoyed these of her; but, alas! I have had my day, it seems, and such are no more for me. No — I will never be an alternate in love to this man, or to any one else; nor will I allow him or any one else to be an alternate to me. I once thought Isabella Delgado mine — all mine — but now that she is, at least partly, another's; and is neither anxious nor willing to forego him for me, I know she is false and has no further claim on my love. Gate-wood, Delgado, King & Co., Retail Dealers in Fancy Goods — or Haberdashery, perhaps — of the Heart. A new-fangled firm this, and a pretty one truly to trade with that ancient, venerable, wholesale concern, Cupid & Hymen! Then, Know all men by these Presents, that the disgusting partnership is hereby forever dissolved."

And so great did the ruined man's indignation grow, at this point, that he actually indulged in a sort of unearthly chuckle at his triumph — or, what he chose to think his triumph — over himself.

So might Marius have triumphed amid the ruins of Carthage — albeit they were ruins over-strewn by the far sadder wreck of the stern old Roman's heart.

The first impulse which came over him, after these reflections, was, to go at once to the lake, and, under cover of night, put the letters into the hands of the old Mexican, who, Filly had told him, lived there in the Señorita's service, — that he might give them to his mistress.

"She shall at least know," thought he, "that I am fully aware of her treachery."

So firmly resolved was he on this course, that he took a pencil from his pocket on the spot, and prepared the Chief's letter for the contemplated delivery, by writing immediately after the closing words — "Your devoted lover, Gatewood" — as follows:

"Carlos King begs the honor of congratulating the Señorita Isabella on her approaching nuptials with her 'devoted lover' — as so delicately foreshadowed in the above *billet doux*."

He knew she would recognize his handwriting, and therefore signed no name.

Besides the motive just stated for delivering these letters into her hands — to inform her, namely, that he knew of her treachery — he felt himself actuated, in no slight degree, by an additional one. Filly's letter would supply her with information which might, in the end, redound to the former's advantage. For, if the Señorita could be made to understand that Gatewood and the girl were to have been married on the very day before the fickle Chief met with her ladyship, and that the very house which the latter,

with so much complacency, occupied for her own personal comfort and convenience, had been specially prepared for the reception of the *other* bride, might she not be so staggered by the announcement as to withdraw, without more ado, her affections from the man, and her person from the house, and leave Filly once more in undisputed possession of both? But he soon saw—or thought he saw, which had the same effect—the utter folly of such a course.

“What a fool am I,” he muttered, “to imagine that such a trifle as *that* could rouse either the shame or the pity of such a person. Moreover, let my sweet little friend speak for herself, if she wishes that faithless lady to know about the state of her affairs. She is constantly on the spot, and has the other’s ear,—and it is certainly no business of mine to act as her negotiator—and least of all, *now*. So, none of that: no, let all thought of the false one be banished this moment and forever.”

Only a few minutes more elapsed before he was on his way to rejoin his companions.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The hour’s come, but not the man.—KELPER.

Now, the devil that told me, I did well,
Says that this deed is chronicled in hell.

King Richard II.

What

I did not well, I meant well.—*Winter’s Tale.*

THAT lovely June evening for which the Señorita and her lover had arranged their parting tryst, dragged along full wearily to both the fair dwellers at the lake. They lay, side by side, in the hammock, swinging listlessly—

awaiting, with about equal anxiety, King's arrival. Nature seemed to have decked herself out in a style of brightness and beauty peculiarly fitted for an occasion which promised so well to disperse the overhanging heart-shadows, and make all happy alike. But, then, Nature is not always what she seems to poor human eyes.

They did not know precisely at what hour to expect their guest. They watched the sun's last rays as they tipped for a few moments the tree-tops on the eastern bank of the lake, then faded entirely away — but he came not then. Nor yet did he, while the twilight dampness was extracting fragrance from the spicy woods around, and zephyrs were floating the instilled balm onward to where they sat, and dispensing luxurious coolness about them. Nor yet while the crescent moon rode high, checkering with "dim religious light" those leafy aisles, where an altar might well have been set up to the God who was even then so lavishly showing forth His glories around them, — His blessings, they thought, — fond lovers! vain dreamers! poor deluded mortals! — so soon to follow.

"Filly," said the Señorita, about midnight, "he surely cannot be coming to-night."

Each had thought this for several hours past, but neither had before ventured to shape it into words. The "witching hour," however, had at last broken the spell, — and no sooner had Isabella thus expressed herself, than her companion readily agreed with her.

"But, Señorita, what could have prevented his coming?"

"Oh, many things may have prevented," replied the other, bracing herself with at least the appearance of hope — the more, perhaps, that precious little of the cheering substance itself was there. "He may not have been able to get a leave of absence to-day. Or such news may have reached camp as to require all to push on to the front,

Other things, too, may have happened. I have no doubt he will come to-morrow."

Now what these "other things" were which Isabella did not see fit to specify, may of course be gathered from the thoughts which her heart conceived, but which aborted on her tongue.

"Could he have suspected," she asked herself, "from my hesitation — my confusion — and, at last, when he proposed our immediate marriage — my downright refusal, — could he have suspected, from these, that I was not as true as I should be, and that there was something covert and insincere in my conduct? It may well be so; for I marked how his beaming countenance fell at that very moment. But then he looked cheerful again after I gave my reasons for acting as I did. Yes — and he parted full of tenderness. Alas! he may have brightened up, to all outward appearance, — may have looked loving, to the very last, — may have done all this on purpose to mislead me, — intending, even whilst he did so, never to see me again, thinking me — false!"

The other thing that Isabella imagined might have happened to prevent the return of her lover, was his having possibly met with his former benefactor, Gatewood, or with some of the men from the latter's command, who might by chance, during some of their camp-fire discussions, have so expressed themselves within his hearing as to give him an inkling of what had been so long going on at the lake. For although she had no positive knowledge that her engagement with the Chief had been bruited about, or even that it was suspected, she thought such gossip not at all improbable, and now regretted, more than ever, her suicidal oversight in not freely enlightening King — when she had so good an opportunity — with her own statement of the case, instead of running the risk of his getting hold of

some perverted and ruinous version of the unfortunate affair.

Filly, who, in placing the letters in King's hands, had acted from an impulse caught from looking hastily at the matter, — and then only on its bright side, — now that the dark side began to obtrude itself, came, by degrees, to discover how easily her conduct might produce an effect just the opposite of her intentions.

It was not very long after midnight that they retired to their bed, since sitting up longer for their expected guest would evidently have been hoping against hope.

All the next day, they were expecting him — the next — and still the next. They then gave him up, — but yet hoped, that, since he could not come in person, he would at least send tidings of himself by letter or otherwise, — and why he had not kept his engagement. At last, even this faint hope failed to delude them longer.

"Oh, that I could let him know of my duplicity!" thought Isabella. "But he is far on his way across the wilderness, and, so, my wish is vain. My only alternative is to await, with what patience I may, the end of the war. If I can see him then, all may yet be well. Faint hope, indeed! but I can do nothing better than nurse it."

Filly, for her part, from thinking that her hasty action might have had an effect the direct reverse of what she desired, came soon to have no doubt whatever that such a result — so disastrous to her own prospects, as well as to her friend's — had already been consummated.

But we must now leave these melancholy mourners to their sorrows, and their penitential tears, for many a long day, and turn our attention to the busy and bloody scenes about being initiated on the plains of Texas.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

In the meantime, what hear you of these wars?

All's Well That Ends Well.

I hope here be truths. — *Measure for Measure.*

THE advance of the patriot army, after driving the royal troops from the west bank of the Sabine, as stated in Gatewood's letter to his betrothed, had pushed on to Nacogdoches with all dispatch, lest the enemy should have time to fortify that place to such an extent as to render its capture a bloody affair. As it was, they found, on their arrival, that the force which they had driven from the Sabine having retreated to Nacogdoches and joined the garrison there, the two combined had hastily constructed, on the hill overlooking the town on the east, a breastwork, mainly of bales of wool designed for the Louisiana market.

The enemy fled before the charge of the Americans, with scarcely a shot from either side, and could be seen rapidly making their way through the town at the very time the assaulting forces were taking possession of the abandoned works. The Americans, resolved, from the very necessity of the case, to utilize everything during this campaign, and finding that the wool-works, as such, could nowise serve the cause, sent them off without delay to Natchitoches, to be exchanged for additional arms and equipments, as well as enough supplies to serve them until they should get further into the interior; for in all these the little army was still sadly deficient, the United States authorities having so seriously menaced its dispersion — to prevent an entanglement with Spain at this particular time, when the long-

threatened war with England had become a reality — that it had been forced to cross the border before they could be procured in sufficient quantities.

Up to this point, the advance, though nominally under the direction of General Bernardo, was really commanded by the Chief of the Neutral Ground, whose men, indeed, composed, thus far, nearly the whole force. Here they were joined by the volunteers from the United States, numbering about a hundred and fifty.

Having now penetrated some fifty miles into the Spanish territory, they considered themselves secure from disturbance by the United States government. That government, however, might yet materially cripple the expedition by capturing the expected arms and supplies, which, even in case of the most fortunate conjunction of circumstances, could not reasonably be looked for sooner than six or eight weeks to come. At length, much to the little army's relief, both mentally and physically, those war-essentials reached Nacogdoches in safety.

It was a bold undertaking which they had now before them, — and it was well for them that no braver hearts could anywhere be found. Three hundred men were about to march through a wilderness where subsistence, drawn, as it necessarily would be, from the wild game of the country and from the few sparsely provisioned posts which they might hope to capture, must needs be precarious. After taking, on their way, such places as should offer resistance, and beating back such force as should be sent against them, they must expect to meet, when they should reach the western confines of Texas, at least, if not before, the main army of the enemy. If worsted then, they must either fight to the last, or retreat five hundred miles through a hostile country, pursued by a merciless foe. If captured, a fate worse than death itself would await them in dun-

geons, or mines well-nigh as hideous, where they must drag out for years, unless suffering should sooner extinguish the vital spark, a wretched existence. Nor could they hope for any material accession to their small force, — for the United States, whence alone they could hope for recruits, had, as before stated, become involved in a struggle with the most powerful nation on the globe, and, of course, no more Americans could be expected, at a period so critical to their own country, to leave it, that they might lend a hand in freeing another.

In fact, taking into consideration the great disparity of the opposing forces, as well as all the other circumstances of the case, no bolder military project than the one we are about to chronicle, with such meagre facts as we can gather, had taken place on this continent since Cortez, with a handful of men, marched on the capital of the Montezumas; for not only had the Aztecs no knowledge of gunpowder, but they had only rude arms, at best, to cope with the artillery and musketry of their invaders. The brief period beginning in August, 1812, and ending just one year from that time, was one of the most eventful in the whole history of Texas; and it was only the fact that a bloody conflict at home engrossed, at the time, the entire attention of our people that prevented the Gachupin War in that province from occupying in history a much larger space than it does. As it is, this brief, but bloody war — which, as far as the American arms were concerned, began and progressed so gloriously, even to the very verge of final triumph, and at length closed in an overthrow almost unprecedented in its completeness and suddenness — fills, on the historic page, but an insignificant space. And, truth to say, but few persons in the United States have even so much as heard of such a war.

During this time, Magee had remained behind, at

Natchitoches, to collect and forward what recruits he could. He, however, soon arrived at Nacogdoches, and took command; though it was understood that Bernardo — as Magee himself had originally proposed — should be the nominal commander-in-chief throughout the campaign.

Some time in September, the little army left Nacogdoches and moved against Spanish Bluff, on the Trinity. This post, then occupied by about four hundred Spaniards, was evacuated on the approach of the Americans. The latter, after remaining here for several weeks, vainly awaiting reinforcements, set out for La Bahia, an old Spanish town on the Guadalupe, now called Goliad.

When within a few miles of La Bahia, Magee's advance captured certain spies, who gave information that Governor Salcedo commanded at La Bahia, and that, having been told that the Americans would attack the place, he had marched out with fourteen hundred men, and with these was, at that moment, awaiting the invaders in ambush, at the Guadalupe crossing. Magee, on further investigation, finding this statement made good, changed his route, — crossing the river below the ambushed road, — then, making a forced march, reached the fort before daybreak, and captured the small garrison with but little resistance.

Three days afterwards, Salcedo, enraged at having been so completely circumvented, made a furious assault on the place, — but, being driven off, fell to work preparing for a regular siege. The Americans, meanwhile, were by no means idle. They mounted on the bastions of the fort the three six-pounders which they had brought with them, together with the only cannon they found there, — the same being an old nine-pounder, — and proceeded to fortify the place as well as they could, and otherwise to prepare for its defence.

Salcedo had fourteen pieces of artillery of various calibre. Dividing his force — which, by this time, amounted to two thousand men — into four divisions, he stationed one on each bank of the river, above the town, and made a similar disposition below. After cannonading sufficiently to satisfy himself that he could effect nothing without heavier ordnance, he suspended his operations for a fortnight, until he received nine splendid brass cannon, with which he could throw a shot a distance of three miles. Finding, on trial, that even with this accession of artillery little could be done against the strong walls confronting him, he began to approach nearer, finally venturing into the town itself.

Toward the close of November one of the severest fights of the siege took place within the town and under the walls of the fort. It lasted from nine o'clock in the morning until two P. M., when the royal troops hastily retreated, after a heavy loss in killed and wounded, the Americans losing comparatively few. Finding they could not take the town by assault, the enemy now determined to invest it closely and starve the Americans out.

The investment continued for nearly three months, and during this time skirmishes took place almost every day, though there were only two other general engagements. The first of these was brought on, during the latter part of January, without premeditation by either of the combatants. The enemy's main force, on the opposite side of the river, attempted to kill a beef for their own use. The beef escaping ran towards the river in the direction of the fort. Now, although the Americans, when they had captured the place, had found an abundance of corn and salt, they had found little else in the way of provisions. One of Gatewood's hungry companies — the one to which Wynne belonged — chanced to be looking on, and seeing this delicious viand

travelling toward them, their mouths straightway began to water, — observing which, the cool old high-private just named, who always kept an eye to the main chance, addressed those around him in his peculiar style of oratory.

“Boys,” said he, “beef’s a rare thing with us lately, and as we don’t like it quite so rare, s’pose we furnish our own this one time. And to make right shore, boys, that it’s well done for once, s’pose our whole squad crosses the river, and puts in for this here contract.”

No sooner said than done: for it was seldom that Wynne proposed anything in vain. In fact, Patrick Henry’s famous and oft-quoted outburst, reaching its climax of pathos in “Beef! beef!” compared with this *other* “forest-born Demosthenes’” effort, was the merest twaddle, so far as its effect on the audience was concerned. As it was not long, however, before the execution of their project brought them in contact with the enemy, it may well be supposed they forgot all about the beef. From this insignificant beginning, the engagement became a general one, and lasted about two hours — or until night, when the Americans retired, fording the river back again to the fort, with the loss of only seven men. The enemy’s loss was nearly two hundred.

Indeed, throughout the siege, the greatest difficulty, on the part of the Americans, consisted in defending themselves — not against the Spaniards — though this was no child’s play — but against hunger. They could obtain beeves only by sending out foraging parties at night, sometimes as far as the Nueces — a distance of about fifty miles — where cattle of the finest quality abounded, and, on returning, they had to take advantage of the darkness to drive them in between the investing divisions — having sometimes to kill the sentinels, or even to fight a small battle.

Before the last general engagement, — which took place

about the middle of February, — for some unknown reason, a three days' cessation of hostilities had been agreed upon, — the officers of the respective armies exchanging civilities and such courtesies as are usual between gentlemen. It was during this lull that a mysterious event occurred which took every American by surprise and came near proving instantly and fatally disastrous to the expedition. Magee having accepted an invitation to dine in the quarters of the Spanish commander, this festal interview resulted in an agreement between them, that the fort should be surrendered, and the Americans should go home without arms, — Salcedo to supply them with provisions on the way.

Magee returned to the fort, paraded the men, told what he had done, and took their vote by directing those approving his course to shoulder arms. His brave followers unanimously struck the butts of their rifles to the ground with indignation. Magee retired, with no little confusion, to his quarters, leaving the men on parade. Difficulties and disorder threatened. Lieutenant-Colonel Kemper, repairing to Bernardo, — who usually kept in the background, and did little, in fact, throughout the campaign, beyond signing such papers as were necessary, — brought him forth to aid in meeting this sudden and unfortunate emergency. The General sided with the troops.

Meanwhile, a flag from the Spanish commander brought a note to Magee. This was delivered to Bernardo, who found that it reminded Magee of his honor, and of the fact that the hour agreed upon for the surrender had expired. The flag was sent back with no answer.

Salcedo now made a furious assault, took the town, and advancing to the walls of the fort, threatened, for a while, to capture everything and end the war on the spot. The Americans, confounded by the wholly unexpected events which had shortly before occurred, and having no com-

mander, seemed to lose their wonted efficiency as an organized body, though, individually, they were very far from being demoralized. Soon rallying under Kemper, they drove the enemy from the walls, then out of the town, and finally across the river—the fight continuing until night ended it. The Spanish loss was very heavy. Their opponents being on the defensive, suffered of course comparatively little.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Sir, spare your threats :

The bug which you would fright me with, I seek.

Winter's Tale.

We've caught the woodcock, and will keep him muffled.

All's Well That Ends Well.

MAGEE'S bravery being universally conceded, and his honor undoubted,—at least, until this unfortunate event in his life,—all were at a loss to account for his proposed surrender—most unmanly, to say the least of it, when the prospect for repelling the enemy was certainly fair, and when not a man out of his whole command was disposed to yield.

The probability is, that he was no longer the fiery, brave, energetic officer he was when he organized and led forth this expedition from the borders. The seeds of that wasting disease, consumption, had, for a long time, been rankling in his system, and the hardships and exposure to which this campaign had subjected him had given them an impetus of development which fearfully exhausted his physical powers. In proportion as these failed him, and

the lamp of life burned low in the socket, his courage and energy doubtless sank with them, until, by the time Salcedo sought the fatal conference, he had become so wasted and unnerved by the ravages of the disease as hardly to be responsible for his conduct in a situation so trying. Instances are by no means wanting of a similar effect produced by physical suffering on commanders of unquestioned bravery. Of these, Texas has since furnished her proportion. Nay—near this very place, thirty-five years later, the ill-starred but dauntless Fannin, unnerved by the sufferings produced by a severe wound, surrendered his command, when it was said the hope of triumph still cheered his men, and under circumstances which the *unscathed* Fannin would have thought far from desperate. The gallant Texan, too, who led the famous “Mier Expedition,” is defended by his friends from the charge of untimely surrender,—at a moment when victory hovered around his banner,—by the plea, that the severity of his wound had unfitted him for his position. Most brave men, however, retain all their nerve under such circumstances; though ever so horribly mangled in body, their spirit remains unshaken to the last. Magee may not have been one of these. His wily, cold-blooded, wholly unscrupulous antagonist may, deliberately and purposely, have taken advantage of this shattered condition of his health, to frighten him into surrender by gross misrepresentations or downright falsehoods regarding his own resources, present, or expected in the shape of reinforcements; and then may have backed these lies so effectually with threatening to end the matter, if successful, with one of those horrible scenes of butchery, for which the Gachupins were noted, that this poor, suffering wreck and shadow of manhood may have been intimidated into a disgraceful surrender. Our sole choice lying between this extenuating view and barefaced perfidy, we are strongly inclined to choose the former.

Magee did not leave his quarters during the fierce struggle going on around him. The emphatic and indignant rejection, by his men, of the terms he had negotiated, had chagrined him no little. Being too feeble, from his malady, and too exhausted by recent excitement, to stand up, or even to sit up, throughout the fight, he lay, most of the time, on his bed. Occasionally he would rise and stagger to a window, whence he watched — with what concern can never be known — the combatants as they exchanged hardiments in the deadly strife.

Night closed upon them at last, — and he could see no more. But when he, soon afterwards, caught the triumphant shout of the Americans, which told him of a glorious victory, a sense of utter shame and disgrace came instantly over him. What little life he had left was nearly extinguished by the shock, and he straightway sank back on his bed in the agony of remorseful despair.

It was at this moment that some one stole softly into his room without any warning knock. He could see a stalwart form gliding stealthily along the wall between him and the window, until it stopped close beside him.

“Who *are* you?” demanded Magee, in feeble tones, at the same time rising to his elbow, and feeling his flesh “creep” with terror, as the apparition stood directly before him, towering and motionless.

The only answer was a clear cold laugh, — not loud, but having the genuine fiendish ring, so far as we mortals may judge at all of fiendish mirth.

At the unearthly sound, Magee quickly shifted his position to the farther side of the bed, and, as he did so, said, scarcely above his breath:

“I never heard that laugh before — nor any like it!”

“No — you never heard me laugh: but you’ve heard me groan. Magee! I come to you besmirched with powder,

and red with blood, that, while my hand's in, I may play my little game with you all the better."

"Did I ever do you a wrong, that you threaten me so savagely?"

"The scars on my back would freshen your memory, if you could see them. Perhaps naming them will do it."

"You are one of Gatewood's men, then?"

"Ay — ay — and this is our day of settlement — and I'm glad I can pay you in full. Here's for the blood your stripes drew from me," said he, taking from his belt a long knife which gleamed in the light of the window. "But, for the fire-scars which you branded into my flesh, you shall get enough of *them*, this night, in hell!"

The intruder, as he said this, stalked around to the other side of the bed, that he might be nearer his intended victim, still holding the avenging blade in his hand.

"It's but a poor revenge," said Magee: "by killing me, you only anticipate, by a few days at most, the work of disease."

"That may be. But, then, the pleasure of it! To guide this blade across your d—d throat at last! To *feel* it, as it cuts in!"

"It was cowardly in you — what is your name?"

"I am the devil."

"I can almost believe you. It was cowardly in you, I say, Mr. Devil, to wait till I was so near dead to do this."

"Would you have fought me, if I had challenged you?"

"In health, I would have fought the devil, upon occasion; and you say you're the devil."

"Yes — and you might have killed him, too. Magee, I would have been afraid of you in open fight: but I've often watched my chance to kill you. Nothing else could have made me serve under you. I would have shot you when your back was turned — stabbed you in the dark —

poisoned you — or killed you, any other way — but I knew, if they found it out, they 'd make short work of me; for you were all the rage then. But you've disgraced yourself to-day, and I might cut your throat before the whole d—d army, and not a man raise a finger."

"So you wouldn't be ashamed to kill a dying man — not even publicly?"

"Yes: shame might prevent me — but nothing else would, if *you* were the man. There's no public here, though."

So saying, he strode a step forward, which placed him in contact with the bed; then reaching forth his armed hand, he was about to execute forthwith his bloody purpose, and that, too, as was evident, in the most summary manner, when Magee, without attempting any resistance, or even stirring from the spot where he lay, said:

"So you will kill me?"

"I will, by God!"

"And nothing can stop you?"

"Nothing this side o' hell — and hell'll have to be smart to do it."

"Then I'll tell you, man — or devil — or whatever you may be — a secret: that, in killing me, you but do me a favor. I long for death. I was wishing for it when you entered. The few days' respite that my disease would give me, seemed entirely too long to look forward to, and I could not bear the thought of waking, even once more, to the morning light, to face my shame. You thought me frightened when you entered. So I was, — but it was only a supernatural dread: you came in so much like a ghost. As soon as I found you were real flesh and blood, and learned your deadly purpose, I looked upon you as a friend."

Whether or not Magee spoke thus with entire sincerity,

may be doubted. He probably strained the point a little, in order to dash the sweets of vengeance which his grim assassin was about to sip.

"*I* your friend?" shrieked the man, almost beside himself with rage.

With these words, he clutched Magee by the throat, either because his fury came upon him so suddenly that he did not once think of using the knife, although it was drawn ready in his other hand, or because he wished to torture him a while before killing him.

If the latter, he widely miscalculated either the force, or the length of his gripe, — for his victim never moved after that powerful hand was taken from his throat.

Finding that he was indeed dead, Crabtree — for it was he — the same who had uttered such a terrible threat against Magee during Wynne's interview with the men at Camp Wildwood — stole out as softly as he had entered but a few moments before, — leaving only the *remains* of the commander of the patriot army, but yesterday the idol of all, whose sad fate was, to be disgraced — deposed — and thus murdered — within a few brief hours.

The enemy made no further demonstrations, but continued in their quarters about a week, when they raised the siege and commenced their retreat to San Antonio. A few days later, Kemper set out in pursuit with his whole force, — to which, just before starting, he had received an accession sufficient to supply all losses up to this date. About one-half of this small reinforcement were Americans, the other being Coshatta Indians, (known, then, as Quachattas,) the remnant of a brave tribe living on the upper Sabine, who had always been friendly with the Americans, and bitterly hostile to Spaniards.

Salcedo soon hearing of the invaders' approach, sent out,

to meet them, General Herrera, and another General who had just brought reinforcements dispatched from the interior provinces by the viceroy. Their whole force amounted to about twenty-five hundred men. The first information the Americans had of the enemy was given when within nine or ten miles of San Antonio, by a picket firing into their right flank, the left being protected by the San Antonio River—here twenty or thirty yards wide—along which they were marching.

The Mexican force was ambushed on a slightly elevated ridge, which was covered with chaparral. This ridge, running along between the San Antonio and the Salado,—a small creek, which empties into that river, at an acute angle near this point,—was crowned, about the centre of the royal line of battle, by several pieces of artillery. An order was given by the American commander, that, at the tap of the drum, a general charge should be made. The men were to advance to within thirty yards of the enemy, fire three rounds, load again, and charge along the whole line. The Coshattas, on the extreme right, misapprehending the order, charged sooner than they should have done, and consequently suffered greatly, losing some of their principal braves in a hand-to-hand struggle. The survivors, however, stood their ground, and fought with undaunted bravery, killing a great many of the enemy.

Meanwhile, the Americans came up from the centre and left, and so coolly and deliberately carried out the order of loading and firing repeatedly at short range, that the enemy became demoralized, overshot their opponents, who were a little below them on the hill-side, and when the general charge was made, at once turned and fled along the entire line, despite the many gallant efforts of their officers to rally them. Their loss in killed and wounded was nearly one thousand, a very large proportion being

officers. But few prisoners were taken. The Americans lost between thirty and forty.

The victors now pushed on to San Antonio, and proceeded at once to invest it. Seeing this in contemplation, Salcedo sent out a flag of truce, and after a good deal of parleying, perceiving that he could not help himself, agreed to surrender unconditionally, — by which the Alamo — a very strong fortress — the town, and the entire garrison fell into the hands of the Americans.

For the purpose of formally complying with these terms, Salcedo rode forth and offered his sword, first to Captain Taylor, who referred him to Kemper. Kemper, in his turn, referred him to General Bernardo Gutierrez, as commander-in-chief. The proud Gachupin's hatred getting the better of his discretion on seeing his old foe triumphant before him, and on finding himself in a fair way to be personally humiliated before so many witnesses, was unable, or unwilling, to endure so much. Accordingly, in an evil moment, flown as he was with insolence, he advanced in front of that commander, and disdaining to hand him his sword, as he had politely enough done in the case of Kemper and his subordinate, ran the thing into the ground right under Bernardo's nose, and turning scornfully on his heel, left it there. Bernardo, after a while, took it up; but the insulting act of Salcedo, and still more, the manner in which it was done, rankled in the vindictive and already deeply wronged Mexican's breast, — destined to break forth, full soon, in such vengeful guise as will never be forgotten in the bloody annals of butcheries.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Now by my faith and honor of my kin,
To strike him dead, I hold it no great sin.

Romeo and Juliet.

Nay — soft I pray you : I know a trick worth two of that.

King Henry VI.

SCARCELY was Bernardo established in his quarters in the town, before he was visited by Juan Delgado. This young man's sole object in the war, as avowed by himself in his conversation, previously given, with the Señorita Isabella, was to avenge the cold-blooded murder of his father. As before stated, he was at one time, while in the Neutral Ground, on the point of returning to San Antonio to assassinate Salcedo, who had caused the murder to be perpetrated. But on learning that the latter had left that place for the city of Mexico, he was constrained to forego his vengeance for a while. When the campaign opened, he was nominally taken on Bernardo's so-called staff—a position which was not only a sinecure, but one which had neither honor nor emolument appertaining to it. From what now speedily followed, it is quite probable that the young man, who was by no means wanting in spirit, sought so inglorious a position merely because it would enable him to leave the army at any time, for the accomplishment of certain side-purposes, without prejudicing the service,—if, indeed, he had not the General's assurance that such privilege should be accorded him whenever he might see fit to ask it. Be this as it may, on hearing, soon after the expedition set out from Nacogdoches, that Salcedo had returned to San Antonio, he readily obtained his General's consent to go forth on the hunt of him.

When he reached the latter town (in disguise), he ascertained that Salcedo had, several days before, started out, at the head of the royal forces, to meet the Americans at La Bahia. There being of course no hope of reaching that tyrant while surrounded by his army, the young man promptly set himself about doing what he thought was the next best thing in his power to do under the circumstances — secretly organizing in his native town a company of Mexicans, who might be ready to join the patriots as soon as they should arrive.

“We’ve caught the monster at last, General,” said he, gloatingly, as soon as he had greeted Bernardo.

“Yes,” replied the other, with an oath. “And now the difficulty is how to deal with him.”

“What!” exclaimed Delgado, elevating his voice to a high key, while the fire gleamed in his great dark eyes. “You not know what to do with *Salcedo*? Is this possible, General Bernardo?”

“Young man, don’t let your excitement proclaim our designs to the whole city: speak a little lower, if you please.”

“General, I care not if the whole city, and the whole world into the bargain, know that I’m resolved to have the blood of that infernal villain.”

“But what, if such a broad announcement of it should foil its execution?”

“Is he not in our power? and are not *you* commander-in-chief? What more can be needed? Do you but give me the order —”

“The obstacle in the way is not what you conceive it to be. Nor does it lie *here*,” said Bernardo, striking his breast.

“Then,” replied Juan, “I am wholly at a loss to —”

“The difficulty,” interrupted the General, “lies with the

Americans. I know them too well to believe they would ever consent to such an act."

"I say we must have Salcedo's blood, let come what may. D—n the Americans! Have they come into our country to dictate our treatment of the murderers of our families? If so, let them go to hell! And the sooner, the better."

Delgado was quite sincere in all he said. In fact, he was so near that point of temporary insanity which is at present the rifest plea for homicide, that he had become perfectly regardless of consequences, provided only vengeance could be visited upon the incarnate fiend, who, after causing him so many disappointments in the matter of reaching him, had at last come within his swoop.

Bernardo, however, though sufficiently vindictive by nature, contemplated the thing in a somewhat different light. Vengeance was much with him — as, indeed, with what Mexican is it not? — but still it was only a secondary object. He was by no means unambitious; and having already been chosen, by the Military Council, Provisional President of the young Republic, he had good reason to think that, by the exercise of only a moderate degree of prudence, he would be chosen permanently to that exalted station. But he well knew that, if, by any rash act of his, the Americans should be driven from the service, all these personal aspirations must inevitably be dashed — to say nothing of the national welfare.

"That may be your view, Juan," he replied, with great coolness, — "but it's not mine. We owe our successes, thus far, to the Americans. Our countrymen, I am sorry to say, have as yet done little or nothing. To be sure, they may do something, now that our allies have so auspiciously opened the war in this quarter; and I sincerely hope they will. But let them do their best, they cannot,

unaided, expel these Gachupins from our native province—at least they cannot at present; nor is it at all likely they will be able to effect their expulsion for years to come.”

Delgado, of course, was not convinced. I say “of course,” because it is my firm belief that, since the creation of the world, no one in his particular frame of mind ever *was* convinced that he was not already in the right. If an angel had come down at that moment—or, indeed, at any moment within the previous twelvemonth—bearing credentials of his angelic nature, and his divine mission as unimpeachable as those required by a Radical Congressional Committee of a Democratic member elect, and had said to him, “Young man, God bade me tell thee, thou shalt not kill,” the chances are ten to one that he would not only have disregarded the mandate, but would have bidden the celestial messenger go to the same place to which he had just before consigned the Americans for *their* interference in the internal affairs of Mexico.

“In the name of God,” he exclaimed, “is that fiend to go unpunished? If we do nothing with him now, when can it be hoped justice will be visited on him? Why, sir, he may not go to hell for twenty years yet, unless we send him there *now*. Do you know, sir, that he is treated, at this very moment, more like a gentleman than like the pure devil that he is?”

“Surely no one should know it better than I do,—since he is so treated by my express order.”

“By your order?” cried Delgado, with a scowl that ill became his youthful and really handsome face. “Then, General Bernardo, I am done with you forever! Though *not* with *him*.”

So saying, he turned on his heel, and was about withdrawing without so much as a parting salutation.

“Come back, young man,” said Bernardo, with a peculiar laugh.

The other faced about, to hear what the General had further to say, for there was something reassuring not only in Bernardo's laugh, but in his manner of speaking, and even in the tones of his voice.

"I see," Bernardo went on, "that you are quite as keen for this thing as I am, which is keen enough, God knows. The only difference is in the extent of our projects. Your sole aim is Salcedo, I believe?"

"Yes. I have thought of no other. And yours —?"

"Mine takes a much wider sweep. I would include not only Salcedo, but Herrera and Cordero, with their respective staffs — fourteen in all. Here is the list," he added, taking a paper from a drawer near at hand, and reading the names aloud: "'Manuel de Salcedo, Governor of Texas; Simon de Herrera, Governor of New Leon; Ex-Governor Cordero; Lieutenant-Colonel Geronimo.' Then come five or six captains, three or four lieutenants, an ensign, and a citizen."

"That would make a pretty good cleaning out, for Texas," remarked Delgado, evidently startled, if not shocked.

"And you shall do the work," said Bernardo, "if you will but promise to do it faithfully."

"But, General, not one of these, except Salcedo, ever harmed me or mine, — save in so far as they have fought against our cause. Why then should I —"

"Ask not my reasons. Let it suffice that I think the general good demands it. The only question is, Will you do it?"

"General, I always regarded Cordero and Herrera as the best Spaniards we have ever had in this province: every one so regards them."

"That only makes them the more effectual obstacles to our independence."

"Must such men stand on the same level, then, with a

monster, — and be butchered for their very virtues, as he for his villanies?"

"Well, as you choose, Juan Delgado. I see you are not equal to this thing. So, I will get some one who *is*. Go your way — I have such a one in my eye."

"General, *I* must be Salcedo's executioner."

"One might think you *ought* to be, young man, considering whose son you are."

"Are those, indeed, your only terms?"

"It is but breath thrown away to ask for other."

"Then, it must be done. Yes — rather than miss, I will do even that."

"I'm glad to hear you talk so reasonably. Now let's about it. It admits of no delay. It is a deed whose long contemplation may endanger its performance. The much safer plan is to make it a *memory* at once. However much memory may sting the living, it can hardly quicken the dead. It would be useless to ask our American friends to sanction such work as this: it must be done by strata-gem; and if you can only manage to pick up a squad of desperate Mexicans, who will obey implicitly, asking no questions, I think I have a plan by which the whole thing can be accomplished within twenty-four hours."

"There can be no difficulty," said the young man, "about getting the services of such a squad, so long as *my* company is within reach."

"Do you, indeed, command a company here?"

"Ay, sir — and you may believe they are men who will not be over-scrupulous about such a trifle as slitting a few Gachupin windpipes. But, General, what plea can we use to induce these Americans to deliver the prisoners over to us? Are you willing, as generalissimo, to issue a peremptory order to that effect, — without the awkwardness of an explanation?"

"Oh, you may be sure I have already laid my train to that end; and for doing so, you were, only a moment since, on the eve of leaving me in disgust."

"Do you allude to your kind treatment of the prisoners? for it was that which disgusted me."

"That is what I allude to."

"I confess, I can't see what you could expect to accomplish by that."

"No, Juan — you're too impetuous to plot yourself, or even to see the merits of a plot after it is hatched out by another. But I am older and cooler, and, so, can look ahead a little way. Not satisfied with the proposals of the Americans as to the kind treatment of the captives, I went much further, and, in my turn, proposed to put them on their parole of honor, and even to allow them the liberty of the town — besides other privileges."

"Ay, now I see," said Delgado. "Your object was to blind everybody to the vengeance that you would not forego, but were willing to postpone for a little season, that success might be assured. But suppose the Americans had consented to all this: Salcedo might have effected his escape!"

"I knew they would *not* consent."

"By my father's soul! had I seen him ranging the streets, I would have buried this up to the hilt in his black heart, even at risk of being so served myself the very next moment."

As the young man spoke, he drew a small, keen dagger from beneath his vest far enough to flash it in Bernardo's eyes, then, slipping it back to its sheath, went on:

"In fact, when I was about to leave you so abruptly, a few minutes since, outraged by your seeming generosity to that monster, I had resolved to make my way hence, straight to his quarters, and stab him to death on the spot,

despite all the American bayonets that could have been levelled at me. But I much prefer to play with him a while—as he did with my poor father and mother—on the awful verge of eternity.”

Here a shade of sadness swept the handsome face of the speaker, greatly heightening, for a moment, his natural beauty, and well calculated to excite a touch of pity in the beholder’s heart; (had there been any beholder there with a heart susceptible of pity, which was by no means the case;) but it was only for a moment. Vengeance again mounted up from within and drove the soft usurper away.

“You shall have a chance to ‘play with him’ to your heart’s content,” said Bernardo, “if you will but hearken and obey. But first, of the stratagem I have concocted to get hold of these Gachupins. We will imagine a ship at Matagorda Bay, which, by information lately arrived, will sail in a few days for New Orleans. That is the whole basis of my project. Whether any ship is lying there or not, or whether any such information has reached here to that effect, matters little to you. In the next place, I will call the American officers together, for a consultation touching the disposition to be made of the prisoners; and after giving my views as to the unavoidable insecurity of guarding them here, where many of the citizens still adhere, in heart, to the royal cause, I will tell them of the opportunity which presents at the Gulf, to send the prisoners to the United States, on their parole of honor not to return to this country during the war. I shall do this on the avowed pretence of holding their word more secure than guards—for you know, when a prisoner is not on parole he has a perfect right to escape whenever he can. My *real* opinion of a Gachupin’s word you well know to be very different.

“Should the Americans accede to this proposition—which I doubt not they will do—you, Juan, shall escort them

to — Well, whether they ever reach the Gulf or not must depend entirely on you. And I — ”

“ Don’t doubt, General, but they shall reach the Gulf — the Great Gulf — that Gulf of Gulfs — the bottomless Pit, I mean.”

“ And I freely confess my confidence,” the General went on, without much heeding the interruption, “ that you will faithfully discharge the important duty devolved on you. I am glad to trust the matter into such safe hands. There is one thing, however, which you must remember as certainly as though your life were to be the forfeit of forgetting it: not only that the whole responsibility and odium of the result of this thing — let the result be what it may — is to rest on *you*, henceforth and forever, but that you will exculpate me from all complicity in laying this plan. You must swear until you are black — should the necessity arise — that I knew nothing whatever of your intentions.”

“ You need have no fear, General,” replied Delgado, with a gloating laugh, “ of incurring the least particle of either the shame or the merit that may attach to the affair. I can assure you, I shall be but too proud of the catastrophe for the remainder of my days — be they long or short — to allow the world to shift it to other shoulders.”

With this understanding, they parted.

CHAPTER XL.

Oh, you are well-tun'd now,

But I'll set down the pegs that make this music.

Othello.

A young man

More fit to do another such offence

Than die for this.

Measure for Measure.

Duke.— Had you a special warrant for the deed ?

Provost.— No, my good lord, it was by private message.

Duke.— For which I do discharge you of your office.

Measure for Measure.

NEXT morning, Delgado's company, commanded for the time by the first lieutenant, left town, escorting Salcedo, Herrera, Cordero, and others,—all of whom, from having had constantly before them the gloomy prospect of a dungeon, or even worse, were now cheered at the idea of being placed so soon in a state of comparative freedom ; and as they talked and joked with the men who escorted them, they seemed far more like comrades than prisoners. The American officers who had gathered on the plaza to see the captives start, on observing in them such a flow of spirits, waved them a friendly adieu, and bade them God speed. They no more doubted that Bernardo intended to keep good faith in this matter, than they doubted the justice of heaven itself. He had, to serve his own bloody purpose, played so deftly the part of a generous enemy, that they were completely blinded to his treacherous designs.

Delgado himself chose, as yet, to linger behind. This was an all-important part of the blinding process. His appearance at the head of the escort would instantly have transformed that gay cortege into the semblance of a

funeral procession. This, of course, was, of all things, to be avoided, until beyond the sight of the Americans; for it would inevitably have led to a protest on the part of Salcedo and his companions, — their more humane enemies would have interfered, and the scheme of dreadful retribution must have aborted.

A few minutes after they had taken their departure, Delgado rode, alone, from the opposite side of the town, and after making a circuit, forded the river; then taking the road that wound along its eastern bank, soon overtook the procession. Salcedo had not seen him since that fearful day in the records of the Delgado family, when he had forced him and his mother to be present at the execution of the father and husband. We can therefore but faintly imagine the horror which struck through the tyrant's flinty heart, when he saw the scowling youth come thundering up in the rear, — like a black cloud fraught with vengeance, — and take his place at the head of the escort.

All that is known of the precise mode in which this horrible deed was executed, was elicited from the lips of the young man himself during his informal trial.

It would have required at least a week to escort the prisoners to the Gulf, and return. Inasmuch, therefore, as Delgado and his entire company were in town, next morning, in their quarters, the American officers, who had pledged their honor for the safe conduct of the captives, suspecting treachery, and learning that he had sallied forth from the town soon after the escort started, and had taken command of it, caused him to be arrested and brought before them.

"Gentlemen!" he began, as soon as he had come into their presence, and before any one had time to propound a query, "I know exactly what I am brought here for, although I have neither inquired of any one, nor been

informed; and I wish you to understand, once for all, that you need fear no concealment on my part. I alone am responsible for the deed which shocks you."

"Were you present at the butchery?" asked Colonel Kemper, "or did you only —"

"Present? My God! yes, sir. I would n't have missed my share in *that* for the whole world. Present, indeed! Why, gentlemen! I killed Salcedo myself. I stripped him: I tied his hands behind him: I whetted my knife on the sole of his boot, right before his face, that he might see it, and hear it, before he *felt* it. I then asked him if he remembered the day when he had me dragged from my cell, and my mother from our home, that we might *see* my father beheaded — to hear of it merely would not satisfy him. And you may be sure, gentlemen, I did not fail to ask him, further, if he remembered how he ordered the blood from the streaming neck to be sprinkled over our persons — as coolly as you may have seen a priest order his congregation to be sprinkled with holy water from the censer.* I asked him if he knew my mother had died from the shock. And after I had thus jogged his memory — yes, *then*, in that proudest moment of my life, with this very blade — *this* blade — here it is, gentlemen!" he said,

* Lest my readers may think I have invented this horrible portion of young Delgado's story, I will give an extract from a letter which can be found in *Niles' Register*, vol. iv. p. 280. It is written to the Editor:

"PINKNEYVILLE, M. T., May 28th, 1813.

" . . . Col. Samuel Kemper, who commanded in the action fought near St. Antonio, has arrived and is now here. From his information it appears that the killing of the fourteen prisoners was without the approbation of the Americans, and by the express order of the generalissimo, Bernardo. . . . The young Creole who was charged with the execution of this order was one who had, on a former occasion, witnessed many cruelties of Salcedo, and among them the beheading of his father, *at which his mother was also compelled to be present; and by order of Salcedo the blood from the bleeding head of his father was sprinkled over his unfortunate mother.*"

plucking from his belt a knife uncleansed of yesterday's blood, and shaking it aloft with all the terrible grace and beauty of a thoroughly roused tiger—"with this knife, and with this hand, I cut the villain's throat from ear to ear. If you want my life, take it. I care but little: my chief mission is done—and I thank my God that he has spared me to do it."

"How were the other prisoners killed?" asked one of the officers, after the awful pause which ensued at the end of this outburst had continued for a full minute.

"Much in the same way, I suppose. I was too busy myself to observe what my men were doing, or even to think of them at all. I gave them no order—in fact, I said not a word to them: from the moment I caught sight of Salcedo, everything else and everybody else passed from my mind. But I *did* set them the example I have told you of,—and I suppose they were not slow to follow it, for when I had finished my part of the work, I saw the other prisoners lying around me, as dead and as naked as Salcedo."

The officers now put their heads together, and there was a low hum of conversation going on between them for several minutes,—though nothing of what they said could be heard where the prisoner stood, quite alone.

"I believe he is a madman," said one.

"If not," said another, "it would indeed be a wonder; for he certainly has had enough to drive him mad. We all have heard of that fiendish deed of Salcedo's before, but I suppose we had forgotten all about it. I certainly had—or I should never have favored treating him so kindly."

"Well," said a third, "whether insane or not, we may as well discharge him at once. Considering the provocation, there is no one here, I'm sure, who would wish to punish him for killing Salcedo just so soon as he got a chance —

though one might well wish the deed had been done after a less inhuman fashion."

"Gentlemen," said Colonel Kemper, who, thus far, had been a mere listener, "I cheerfully agree with you, that we ought to release this unfortunate young man. Whether the butchery he has perpetrated be justifiable or not, I do not propose to discuss. But, convinced as I am, that any one of us would have done the same thing — though, I hope, in a more civilized way — I cannot see how we could consistently — or conscientiously, if you please — impose a punishment on him, even to the extent of 'breaking' him. But, at the same time, we must not lose sight of the very important fact that our honor was solemnly pledged for the safety of these prisoners, and therefore it behooves us to do something more than we have just done to clear our skirts in this matter. I consider myself involved to a greater extent, personally, than the rest of you, from the fact that, under certain representations from Bernardo, I signed a peremptory order directing the officers of the guard to deliver the prisoners into the hands of such of his subordinates as he might designate to receive them."

"What, then, do you propose to do, Colonel?" asked Major Ross.

"I propose," replied Kemper, "that Bernardo be examined informally. I have my suspicions that he is the guilty one. If he cannot give a consistent and satisfactory account of his part in this miserable affair, he ought then to be tried by a regular court-martial, without the least fear or favor as to the exalted position with which we have entrusted him, — and if proved to be responsible for so gross an act of perfidy, he should be at once deposed."

"Colonel," suggested Major Ross, "before we discharge Delgado, suppose you ask him a few questions about Bernardo's part in this matter."

This being agreed on, Kemper began :

"Captain Delgado, will you be so good as to inform us, so far as you may know, what agency, direct or indirect, General Bernardo had in this killing?"

"Yesterday, I made the General a friendly visit at his quarters," answered Delgado, whose fury had, by this time, reacted into a comparative calm. "In the course of our conversation, after remarking on the insecurity of the prisoners, so long as they should remain here, he said he had information that a vessel was lying at Matagorda Bay, which would soon sail for New Orleans; and that, if he had at his service a company of Mexicans, he would like to send the prisoners off to that point."

"Why did he wish them to be Mexicans?"

"I suppose he thought the Americans could not well be spared."

"Did he assign that as his reason?"

"No — but he had just before said their presence here on the frontier was indispensable."

"Well — that's much the same thing. What next, Captain?"

"Then I offered the services of my command."

"Was he aware, before, that you had a company here? In plainer terms, do you think he intended to hint to you that he would like to have the services of your company in particular?"

"He knew nothing at all, until that moment, about my company — not even of its existence."

"He accepted your offer without hesitation?"

"He did."

"Did he know of Salcedo's inhuman treatment of your family?"

"Oh, yes — he must have known of that: it is known, I believe, to everybody in Texas."

"Did he give you any intimation as to what your treat-

ment of the prisoners should be? whether you were to treat them kindly, or the reverse?"

"He impressed on me the importance of escorting them safely through to the Gulf. Said he had entire confidence that I would discharge the duty faithfully, and that he was glad he was able to commit the matter to such safe hands."

"And you promised to perform your duty faithfully?"

"I did. And, by God! I have kept my promise."

"Do you think the General suspected for a moment that you would keep it in *that* sense?"

"His language, which I have just given you, gentlemen, does n't sound much like it. I have nothing else to judge from."

Colonel Kemper's proposition to examine Bernardo being now unanimously agreed to, he was summoned — Delgado having first been discharged from custody. Although the General might well have fallen back on the dignity of his supreme office and have refused compliance with this irregular summons from his inferiors in rank, he knew too well the tone of character of the American officers and their followers, as well as their importance to himself, to assume towards them any such preposterous attitude. He, therefore, soon made his appearance. While waiting for him, however, one of the captains, who had stepped out to take a stroll of recreation on the Plaza, returned and said he had just heard the hint thrown out by a citizen that the pretended information on which Bernardo had based his plan of sending the prisoners off, must have been manufactured out of whole-cloth, — since there was no vessel at the Gulf, and had not been for weeks; and that, in the present distracted state of the country, it was not at all likely there would be one there for a long time to come — all trade having been destroyed. On this hint mainly they determined to rest in support of their charges.

"General," said Colonel Kemper, soon after Bernardo had entered and gracefully saluted those who awaited him, "we are forced by late occurrences to assume toward you an anomalous and very unpleasant attitude, — which, however, we sincerely hope may be only temporary."

Bernardo bowed politely, and smiled, as he did so, a pleasant smile.

"We are not altogether satisfied, General," Kemper went on, "that you had not some agency, direct or other, in the horrible murders that were perpetrated yesterday a mile or two below this town."

The General started a little from his position, with a surprised look, affected or real, — though, if the former, it was certainly well acted.

"Would you be willing," continued Kemper, "to answer a few interrogatories bearing on that point?"

"Most assuredly, Colonel," Bernardo said; "nothing could give me greater pleasure than to have so good an opportunity of clearing myself of so grave a charge. Proceed with your inquiries, gentlemen, if you please. Or, rather, I *beg* you to do so, for the sake of my own reputation and that of the patriot army. And I sincerely hope you will not stop short of anything which may aid in sifting the matter so thoroughly that there may be no ugly suspicions about it hereafter."

Bernardo, in deporting himself thus confidently, had, of course, taken it for granted that Delgado — who he was aware had already been before this body — had faithfully kept his pledge, by not saying anything to implicate him. And in this assumption, as we have seen, he was quite right.

"General, we suppose you have long ago heard of Salcedo's cruel treatment of the Delgados?" was the next query propounded.

"Oh, yes — it is known throughout the land."

"Then we do not clearly see why, after pledging solemnly your honor, along with ours, that the prisoners should be kindly treated, you should place them, at once, and without any consultation with us, in the power of one of that deeply wronged family."

"There was no other organized company, or squad, to be found," replied Bernardo, "except among the American forces; and I did not hold it safe to send any of them so far away."

"What instructions, if any, did you give Captain Delgado?"

"I told him I wished him to escort the prisoners to Matagorda Bay, where there was a vessel lying, which would take them to New Orleans."

"Did you try at all to impress on him the importance of performing the duty faithfully?"

"Yes — I told him I had every confidence that he would execute my order faithfully, and escort them safely through."

"Had you any personal spite or particular cause of malice against one or more of the massacred officers?"

"None whatever."

This answer, although utterly false as regarded Salcedo, Bernardo delivered without a show of hesitation, and even with an air of the utmost candor. The simple truth is, he had expected the query and was ready for it.

The most unscrupulous liar, before delivering his lie, will cast about him for some sort of salve, however sorry a one, for his poor, miserable wreck of a conscience. So, Bernardo, in meeting this query, argued inwardly, that his spite was entertained against the officers only while they were yet unmassacred, and that as soon as the massacre took place all his spite ceased; *ergo*, he had no spite against any of the massacred officers. So much for a Mexican's

conscience,—or, rather, the remnant of that noble, sensitive conscience with which his Maker has endowed him in common with the rest of mankind, but which has been frittered away in political and social intrigue, until a mere shell is left,—and that often of the hardest kind.

“We would like to know, General, the source of your information to the effect that a sail, destined for New Orleans, is now lying in Matagorda Bay?” was the next interrogatory, and the one on which the Americans—to judge from the intentness with which they awaited the answer—evidently expected the whole matter to turn.

Bernardo showed just enough confusion to be perceptible, and did not at once reply.

“We ask this,” resumed Kemper, on perceiving his hesitation, “because we have since heard that no vessel is there at present, or is likely to be there within any reasonable time.”

These additional words by no means relieved the embarrassment of the accused. Nor is it at all likely his interrogator designed that they should do so. The blood mounted from his guilty heart to his cheek, as Abel’s rose out of the ground and told who was the murderer *then*. He winced unmistakably, and his effort to answer was delayed for some time. During this painful pause, all eyes remained fixed upon him; and though sadly at a loss what to say—yet knowing full well that something must be said, and that speedily, or his ruin was at hand—he managed at last to get off a miserable abortion.

“Well really—gentlemen, I—I have forgotten.”

There was perhaps not a man present who did not think Bernardo’s complicity pretty well established by the latter part of this examination. At any rate, a court-martial was the consequence,—which resulted in implicating him in the murder. He was accordingly—on the ground of

treachery and barbarity — deprived at once of all military command, nominal and real, as well as deposed from the Provisional Presidency, to which he had just been chosen.

So here Bernardo Gutierrez disappears from our story, to reappear briefly but once or twice again. He was doubtless a man of talent, and was possessed of fascinating manners. He had done as much, perhaps, as any one else to initiate this invasion, — though, since it crossed the Sabine, he had — most probably from lack of personal courage — done little or nothing to advance it, — and now he came near working its ruin; for Kemper, Ross, and many other officers, as well as some of the men, disgusted by such perfidious atrocities, which they feared — and certainly not without reason, now that full five hundred Mexicans of San Antonio and vicinity had joined the little army — might, at almost any time, be repeated, abandoned the patriot cause, and returned to the United States.

CHAPTER XLI.

This,

. . . . So horrible, so bloody, must
Lead on to some foul issue. *Winter's Tale.*

The enemies' drum is heard. — *Timon of Athens.*

AT the same time that Bernardo had been placed at the head of the local administration, a council of thirteen — only two of whom were Americans — had been appointed to advise with and assist him in the discharge of his duties. As soon as he was deposed, however, — there being no one who was capable of filling his place, and who would at the same time have been acceptable to the Mexi-

cans,—the entire civil machinery went to pieces. It is not at all improbable that the Americans—well knowing that one of their own number would not, without much murmuring, be tolerated at the head of affairs by the ignorant and jealous Mexican population, and fearing to risk in that exalted position another of Bernardo's race—concluded they would try for a while, in preference, the experiment of having no civil government at all. Be the reason what it may, there certainly was, for a time, no civil government in San Antonio.

The consequence of this want of wholesome restraint was, that, on a small scale, the invaders came near finding their Capua in San Antonio. For the two or three succeeding months,—during which there was not even a rumor, false or other, of an enemy's approach,—the Americans revelled in all the excesses which a plentiful supply of wine and comely women well-nigh invariably develops in the inflammable soldier, during those heyday periods when he is fain to forget the hardships and dangers through which he has already passed, no less than to blind himself against such as are yet to come.

Whilst they were still rioting in almost every kind of dissipation, Elisondo—the same who had so basely betrayed Hidalgo into the hands of the royalists—suddenly made his appearance before the badly picketed town with three thousand of the viceroy's regular force. He could easily have entered the place at once; but not knowing how thoroughly surprised the garrison were, nor how ill-prepared for defence at that particular juncture, instead of seizing this opportune moment, he quietly encamped not quite a mile from town.

There being, on the side of the patriots, no one at the head of affairs to direct their movements, great confusion for a time prevailed. The local influence proved too strong

to justify the Americans in setting up one of their own number in place of the discarded Bernardo; for, despite his broken faith — or, possibly, by reason of it — he was still a favorite with the Mexicans. Had there been in the beleaguered town any one else of that mongrel race, who could have commanded the confidence of his countrymen, it is quite safe to believe that Bernardo would have been ignored — and that, without scruple — by their allies. There was, however, no other Mexican to be for a moment thought of, except Manchaca, who, although possessing, with all his rudeness, a vast deal of vigor, both mental and bodily, and having no little influence with his people, was nevertheless unfit for leadership.

Thus did Bernardo come to be reinstated — though only nominally, and for this special emergency. Perry, an able and energetic officer, was the real commander — both Kemper and Ross, who out-ranked him, having, as already stated, quit the service in disgust of Bernardo's conduct.

Meanwhile Elisondo had the effrontery to propose to the Americans, through a messenger, that, if they would surrender into his hands Bernardo and the other Mexicans implicated in the murder of the Spanish officers, they would be allowed to retire unmolested from Texas. To this they replied to the effect, that not only did they not desire his Excellency's gracious permission "to retire unmolested from Texas," but that they, in their turn, had no intention of allowing *him* any such privilege.

A word to the wise is said to be sufficient; and, if the saying be true, Elisondo must, indeed, have been a fool, that these plain words did not suffice to put him more on his guard than he was presently found to be. His impudent proposition, and the contemptuous answer thereto, were proclaimed in the town, and had, at once, a most happy effect in rallying the people. A general muster was

called, and all Americans and Mexicans capable of bearing arms prepared for battle.

The Americans, with the hope of effecting a complete surprise, — a matter of vast moment to them, when the disparity of numbers, as well as the almost entire want of discipline and experience on the part of their Mexican allies, is considered, — put double sentries on duty, — no one was allowed to pass and repass, and all their cannon were spiked except four pieces.

The Spaniards had thrown up two bastions, with a curtain of about four hundred yards between. This work covered a gentle ridge running hard by the bank of the Alazan, a small branch of the San Antonio river, and behind which they were encamped.

About ten o'clock at night, the Americans marched out by file, in deep silence, until they had reached a point where they could hear the enemy's guard. Here they sat down, with their arms beside them, through the remainder of the night. Orders were given that a charge should be made, on a certain signal. This signal was to be communicated noiselessly by a check from the right of each company: not a word was to be spoken. About daybreak, when the Spaniards were heard at their matins, the concerted signal was set in motion on the extreme left of the little army, and ran through its ranks like an electric shock.

The patriots, numbering about seven hundred and fifty, only one third of whom were Americans, moved forward like veterans. The enemy, as hoped, were completely surprised. The assailants, after capturing their pickets, mounted the works, hauled down the Spanish flag, hoisted their own tri-color — all, before those in camp even so much as suspected what was going on.

The Spaniards, however, notwithstanding the disadvantage which the surprise caused them, as soon as they could

bring themselves to comprehend fully the state of things, rushed to the menaced point and fought bravely. After a hard struggle they succeeded in driving the assailants from the works. But the Americans, by a resolute charge, recaptured them — using only the bayonet — and carrying everything before them, penetrated into the camp. The slaughter was terrible. The battle had lasted several hours, when the Spaniards fled, leaving a thousand killed and wounded, — very few being captured. There fell into the hands of the patriots all the enemy's artillery, a large quantity of ammunition and military stores, two standards, and some silver. The patriots themselves lost nearly fifty killed outright, and about one hundred and fifty wounded, one third of them mortally. This was, as yet, the hardest-fought battle of the campaign.

The battle, however, which was to decide, for many years, the fate of Texas, was yet to come. And it came much sooner than the achievers of the recent glorious victory had any reason to expect.

Bernardo was now a second time dismissed from the service. It is difficult to pronounce, at this late day, with the meagre evidence before us, whether this man was an ardent and self-sacrificing patriot, — lacking, however, the very essential endowments of courage and humanity, — or whether he was only a truckling time-server. It is certain he endured — though with what patience, we cannot now learn — a vast deal of such treatment from the Americans as could have been borne only by the possession of one or the other of the two antipodal qualities above named. Nor were the Americans to be blamed for so treating him. From the moment he violated his solemn pledge in the matter of the murdered Spanish officers, they felt an utter want of confidence in him, — and that they did, is surely not to be wondered at. However sincere they may have

thought his hatred of the royal cause, and of the Gachupins, who so fiercely upheld it; however faithful they may have supposed him to be to the principles of republicanism, — in so far, at least, as consisted with his own peculiar notions of fidelity to those principles, — whatever they may have thought of this man, on these and other points, they never, after that cold-blooded butchery, felt safe in trusting him, — and nothing but the relentless necessity, which actually arose, could have induced them to do so.

To review his course briefly, — now that we have given all the facts, and are about to dismiss him from our notice as an officer, — in the first place, he may be considered the nucleus around which the invading forces gathered on the Sabine. During the nine succeeding months of an active campaign, he did literally nothing for its advancement. Although accompanying the army throughout, he took no part in the operations, except in the passive way of allowing himself to be used as a mere lay-figure, not to be produced save in certain emergencies. Only one emergency requiring his aid arose, — on the occasion, namely, of Magee's proposed surrender at La Bahia, when, as we have seen, he was brought forth, — not, indeed, for the purpose of deciding the question at issue, for the army had already done that with unanimity, but with the view of securing, for the sake of its effect on the Mexican element in Texas, his formal sanction to their already announced decision. With this single exception, nothing whatever is known of him, although half a dozen battles were fought during that time. Nor is his name so much as mentioned elsewhere than as stated above, in any one of the many Texan histories, narratives, reminiscences, or what not, that we have been able to get access to. To be sure, after the brilliant victory on the Salado, which secured the surrender of San Antonio and its garrison, he took up the sword which

Salcedo had stuck in the ground before him: but what of him during the battle? during *any* battle, in fact? Not a single word.

When he at last arrived among his own people, in the above-named town, his cold-bloodedness seems to have been warmed up a little by the contact, — as though he was fain to prove — now that the winter of Texan discontent had been made glorious summer by these sons of Columbia — that he was not quite so torpid as he had been during his hibernation. And like the genuine anaconda that he was, on the first favorable opportunity presenting for a meal after his protracted abstinence, he gorged himself, as we have seen, on fourteen Gachupins at one fell gulp — two of them, Cordero and Herrera, being perhaps the very best native Spaniards in the land; for they are universally represented to have been accomplished gentlemen, fine scholars, brave soldiers, and withal, as possessing a humanity of disposition rare, indeed, in a Spaniard of those days.

Preparatory to the battle of the Alazan, just described, Bernardo was again brought forth from the mist of shame in which he had shrouded himself, and was put prominently forward, as a puppet, to tickle the inordinate vanity, and allay the inordinate jealousy, of his countrymen.

As late as July the 4th, we find him, by the records, issuing, at San Antonio, a high-flown address, in which he says, after recapitulating the unbroken series of triumphs achieved by the little army:

"For all this, I am indebted to the immortal sons of Columbia."

It is probable that this was his last official act. Soon afterwards, accompanied by his family, he found his way to the Neutral Ground. Fifteen years later, he was living somewhere in Mexico, in unmolested obscurity, the independence of that country having then been achieved. Some

time during this long interval, he published an elaborate pamphlet, having for its object the exculpation of himself in the matter of the Salcedo tragedy. From this single fact, we may venture to hope that remorse for that egregious piece of diabolism goaded him throughout the remainder of his life.

CHAPTER XLII.

To-morrow,

We must, with all our main of power, stand fast.

Troilus and Cressida.

It is a day turn'd strangely. — *Cymbeline.*

SCARCELY had the Americans discharged Bernardo, when, resolved to do away with the disagreeable necessity for his further use, they dispatched an agent to solicit the services of a man on whom they had already secretly fixed as his successor.

This man, Don Jose Alvarez Toledo, belonged to a distinguished Spanish family, and was born in Cuba. At one time he resided in Mexico, where he had been a member of the Spanish Cortes, then in existence there. Banished thence for his republican sympathies, he had, for some time past, been living in Louisiana, where he was engaged in forwarding to the patriot army what few recruits he could gather. During the period last referred to he had been kept advised, from time to time, of what was going on in Texas. On receiving the news of his appointment, he forthwith set out for San Antonio, and reached that point soon after Bernardo's departure for the Neutral Ground.

The citizens, as well as the troops, in consideration of his

distinction as an eminent republican Spaniard, sallied forth to meet him and escort him in. He was received with an unusual amount of display, and was at once chosen Commander-in-Chief of the "Republican Army of the North."

Toledo forthwith organized a junta for civil government, and set himself assiduously about the re-establishment of law and order. Alcaldes and their subordinate officials were appointed, and, for a brief season, law, other than military, was supreme in San Antonio.

Unfortunately, however, for the patriot cause, the new commander, despite his fair fame and his soldierly qualities, was regarded with dislike and jealousy by the Mexicans, who openly murmured that a Gachupin — that is, a native of Spain — was to govern them, although he proposed to govern them in accordance with those very principles of liberty which they themselves were so zealously maintaining. It would seem that, either from gross stupidity or blind prejudice, they habitually failed to recognize any difference between a Spaniard who was a true friend and a Spaniard who was a mortal enemy. Accordingly, Manchaca — now that Bernardo had left the country — found the majority of his fellow-citizens disposed to place themselves under *his* auspices. The alienation of so large a portion of the native population boded no good to the cause of independence.

It was not long after Toledo had inaugurated his government, and set the political machinery fairly to work, that the American scouts rode into town with the startling announcement that a large Spanish army was approaching.

The republicans promptly marched forth to meet the minions of despotism. It was now nearly two months since the battle of the Alazan. The scattered remnants of Elisondo's army had made their way, as fast as utter consternation could impel them, to the interior of Mexico, where

they of course lost no time in circulating tidings of the disaster that had befallen the royal arms.

General Arredondo commanded the north-eastern provinces of Mexico at this time. He was a soldier of unquestioned ability, as well as unquestionable ferocity — one of the generals who had borne a conspicuous part in the defeat of Hidalgo, and a no less conspicuous part in the subsequent atrocious massacres. He was even charged with having, at Altimea and Saltillo, put to death women and children; and, from subsequent events, the truth of which does not rest on hearsay, it is probable the charges were well founded.

Joining his forces with such of Elisondo's as he could get in hand, he set out for Texas, in company with that badly-beaten and much-chagrined leader, at the head of four thousand men. Halting at a lake, about a mile west of the Medina river and fifteen miles from San Antonio, he set about fortifying his position. He threw up a breast-work in the road, in the form of the letter $\triangleleft$, with the open end towards San Antonio. This work he masked from view by setting up bushes like a natural growth of chaparral.

On receiving information of the approach of the republicans, one-half of his command, with four pieces of artillery, was thrown forward as a decoy. The Americans were commanded by Kemper, who — perhaps under the inspiration of Toledo's leadership — had recently returned from the United States, whither, as before stated, Bernardo's perfidious conduct had driven him, disgusted and indignant. The Mexicans were commanded by Manchaca — the whole force being directed by Toledo, who differed from his predecessor in that he was no mere puppet.

Manchaca's insubordination, and his evident envy of the

commander-in-chief, probably induced the latter to commit the fatal blunder of placing the Mexicans in one body in the centre, thus separating the Americans, who formed the wings. The principal officers of the Texan army differed about the propriety of crossing the Medina. Toledo proposed to feign a retreat, and thus lure the enemy over to the east bank. Kemper, with his characteristic, fiery valor, opposed it, and at last carried his point. This noble American had chafed sorely during his separation, for principle's sake, from his struggling comrades; and now that he had joined them once more, he was eager — perhaps too eager — to atone for his absence by closing at once with the foe. Accordingly, the Texans, crossing the river, pressed forward, the enemy yielding ground, though slowly and in good order. After retreating about a mile, a vigorous onset broke them, and they fled, leaving their cannon behind.

Toledo, fearing an ambuscade, besides thinking the ardor of the men was carrying them too far from water, ordered them to fall back upon the river. From this order arose at once discord, and consequently confusion. Kemper and Manchaca galloped furiously along the lines, countermanding the orders of the commander-in-chief, and swearing there should be no retreat.

The Americans, of course, preferred obeying Kemper; and as Toledo was disliked by the Mexicans, while, on the other hand, Manchaca was very popular with them, they pushed on in total disregard of the former's order to fall back. During this period of disorder in the Texan ranks, the Spaniards had rallied. The fighting now recommenced, and the enemy, closely pressed, retired a second time, though still fighting and without confusion, to their intrenchments. There the patriots were suddenly exposed to a most destructive fire of cannon and musketry from Arredondo's

whole force, whose great superiority in numbers now became evident. The Mexicans being terror-stricken by the first terrible volley, almost the whole of them turned and fled, — appearing no more on the field.

It was at this precise juncture that Toledo's blunder in arranging his order of battle was made fearfully obvious; for this untimely flight of the entire Mexican force would, most probably, not have been fatal had the Americans been kept in one body. But forming, as they did, the right and left wings, they were subjected to the incalculable disadvantage of being widely separated at that very crisis when concentrated action alone could be depended on to retrieve the day. They, however, did not flinch from the perils before them, but, rushing upon the breastworks, fought with a desperation proportioned to their fearful environments.

At this point in the struggle, the Spanish cavalry was broken, and Arredondo made preparations to retire. When about commencing his retreat, however, Colonel Musquiez, a traitor from the Mexican ranks, rode over to the royalists, with the news — which was not quite true, though, of course, sufficiently so for such a villain, when his infamous purposes were to be subserved thereby — that the Americans were beaten: moreover, that they were fainting, from want of water, and that it would be impossible for them to resist one more determined onset. Thereupon Arredondo rallied his cavalry, and with these and some of his freshest companies of infantry, rushed furiously on the Americans. Being by this time terribly thinned, their allies having long since fled, their ammunition being nearly spent, worn down by almost superhuman efforts, and still further enfeebled by a scorching sun and a lack of water, they — being nothing more than mortals, after all their display of heroism — began to give way. A

merciless butchery now commenced, and most of the few brave fellows who escaped from the field were slain in their long flight back to the Neutral Ground.

The Mexicans, who fled early, suffered comparatively little. The handful of Coshatta Indians, however, stood by the Americans to the last, and shared their heroic fate.

The Spanish cavalry started immediately in pursuit, and scrupled not a moment to butcher all who were so unfortunate as to be overtaken. At Spanish Bluff, on the Trinity, they captured seventy or eighty of the fugitives, whom they marched to an island of timber in the vicinity, where, with a touch of diabolism from which hell itself—if indeed even hell would not recoil from it—might take an instructive lesson in torture, they caused the victims to stand hard by and witness the horrible preparations which for several hours were going forward for their execution. They first dug a long, deep trench, which they bridged with a log. They then tied the limbs of the doomed, set them, ten at a time, on the log, and shot them,—making the little woods ring with their fiendish merriment as each batch of dead and dying dropped, with a heavy thud, into the great yawning grave below, where they writhed, and groaned, and struggled a-top of the writhing, groaning, struggling mass which had just preceded them.

Among the few Americans who reached Natchitoches were Kemper, Perry, and Taylor,—the last-named badly wounded.

The victorious party pursued with vengeance every friend of republicanism in Texas. The town of Trinidad, at Spanish Bluff, was utterly wasted. Such of its inhabitants as did not escape were driven to a hill in the vicinity, called Loma del Toro, or Bull's Hill, and massacred in cold blood.

Two days after the battle of the Medina, General Arre-

dondo with his wagons full of his own wounded and dying, made his triumphal march into San Antonio. Here he forthwith seized and imprisoned seven hundred of the peaceable citizens. Three hundred of these he confined in one house, and on the following morning nineteen of them were found to have died during the night from suffocation. From day to day, the remainder were led forth and shot without even the pretence of a trial. This inhuman tyrant had also a prison for women. Here he kept in close confinement five hundred of the wives, daughters, and other female relatives of the patriots. On these the daily task was imposed of grinding between stones, with the hand, twenty-four bushels of Indian corn, and converting the same into Mexican cakes, called *tortillas*, for Arredondo's army.

By the time this monster had thus, and otherwise, glutted his fiendish appetite for blood and torture, his precious lieutenant, Elisondo, who had pursued the fugitives to the Trinity, returned to San Antonio, driving before him, on foot, the widows and orphans of those he had there slain.

Of the few Americans who survived, such as had not already seen enough bloodshed, finding their own country now deeply involved in a fierce struggle with Great Britain, volunteered their services to aid in repelling the invader from their own homes. This final withdrawal of their brave allies, by whom so many brilliant successes had been achieved, and with the lesson of the late terrible retribution before them, it may well be believed that the sparsely scattered citizens of Texas were slow to stir up again the fires of revolutionary strife. For five consecutive years an awful hush, like that we feel in the presence of the dead, or of the ghosts of the dead, rested on that fair province—so blessed by heaven—so cursed by tyrants.

CHAPTER XLIII.

You are a man —

You lack a man's heart. — *As You Like It.*

If you live to see this come to pass, say, Pompey told you so.

Measure for Measure.

WE will now turn to our fair friends at the lake. A whole year has gone by since they were last named in this story — a year of wearing grief and remorse to both. During the first portion of that period, they had roamed nervously about by day, alone, much preferring solitude to each other's society, each feeding on her own sad thoughts, as though these were the sole sustenance of her mental life. At night, they slept but brokenly, and in the morning awoke at an early hour, unrefreshed and haggard. They both, however, were blessed with most excellent constitutions; and, as is the usual result under such physical advantages, the present state of depression, instead of wearing these lone mourners out, began itself to die away. This grew at length into a state of patient endurance, during which, although they could tolerate for hours, without any annoyance, each other's company, they sat in silent meditation, rarely conversing, for they had as yet few thoughts in common — none indeed that would have admitted of agreeable discussion. Understanding each other as they did, they could not but know that any attempt at free communion would have been but mockery.

This stage of their sorrow began, in its turn, to wear away, and they gradually lapsed into their previous boon relations with each other. They began to converse, not from necessity, as they had all along done at times, but

purely for the pleasure which conversation afforded them. They began to renew their rambles together through the woods. They began to resort again to their favorite diversion of rowing upon the lake. In short, they began to fall into all their olden habits. With such healthful exercise and cheerful intercourse came, as a natural consequence, better appetite, refreshing sleep, quiet nerves. In this improved condition, they were enabled to endure, with comparative comfort, a year's dreadful suspense, which, but for the boon of unusual physical vigor, might have forced them to succumb long before.

When the storm of a terrible grief first breaks upon us, we shrink, quail, tremble before it; but if it does not deprive us of life outright, we come, by degrees, to accommodate ourselves to the new atmosphere in which we believe we are destined to live for the remainder of our days. We still see each flash and hear each bolt, and if these seem not so keen nor so loud as once, it is only because we do not look and listen for them so eagerly as we did. In fact, since we mark, only through the reflex aid of memory, this storm which has long ago passed, but has left its melancholy traces behind, we do not see and hear any more the thing itself. We once looked aloft and saw the black cloud in substance lowering above us: we now look down and see only the black shadow about our path. The vivid lightnings once burned into our eyeballs, — now we see but a reflected glare; while, instead of the startling crash, it is only the distant echo of the reverberating thunder that we hear.

Thus we become, in some sort, used to the tempest that overhangs our life. To be sure, we are never without a consciousness that it is there — above us — around us — and, indeed, within us — but it is only a vague consciousness — just as, at other times, we *feel*, rather than see, that

some revolting object from which we would but cannot escape, is lurking near.

From the first, Isabella had thought of writing fully and freely to her lover in explanation of her conduct, should an opportunity present to send a letter. But she was perfectly aware that Miguel, the only person whose services she could hope to command, was too timid to venture while there was the least shadow of danger to himself. This old man had not only a holy horror of the ferocity of the Gachupins, but a most exalted opinion of their collected strength. Although a republican at heart, he had no confidence whatever that the cause which he passively favored would prevail. From the moment the little army crossed the Sabine, he began his lugubrious predictions—sometimes to the Señorita when she would endure them, but chiefly to his wife, in whom, holding, as she did, opinions in common with his own on this point, he found a patient, nay, an eager listener—that they would soon come back, such of them at least as survived, a beaten and bleeding fragment.

Entertaining these morbid views, he turned a deaf ear to all Isabella's entreaties to be the bearer of her letter to the Texan camp. Not only did she lavish on him all her persuasive powers, but she threatened to discharge him unless he would do her bidding in this matter. This, of course, did not move him, since he well knew that, for the present at least, he was indispensable to her, and in no danger of being so summarily disposed of. She then offered to reward him, when the war was over, with a certain amount of gold, with no other effect, avaricious though he was by nature, than to make him stretch his eyes in utter astonishment at the liberality of the offer, which was far beyond anything he had before heard of in the matter of letter-carrying, and set him to vainly wondering what could be

the theme of an epistle so momentous as to justify such a lavish expenditure.

The truth is, after the army left the Trinity, it would have been no easy task for a much bolder courier than Miguel would have proved, to reach them. For, thence they marched directly, and at no laggard pace, for La Bahia, where they were immediately shut in by Salcedo's army, and henceforth to the end of the siege, a period of about four months, maintained by valor alone such intercourse with the surrounding country as was dictated by dire necessity—their only alternative being, as herein before explained, starvation. Even for weeks after San Antonio had fallen into the hands of the patriots, no reliable news to that effect reached Natchitoches. What one person would report on coming in, another would contradict before the week had passed. In fact, the royalists had, in the very beginning, so arranged matters that rumors adverse to the invading force should find their way to Louisiana at brief intervals,—thus discouraging such American recruits as had already gone thus far, from pushing on any further westward to assist their countrymen. At one time the patriots had been utterly routed, and were flying in every direction. At another, they had been captured and sent to Mexico, to be thrown into dungeons, or to drudge in the dreadful mines. At another, they had surrendered and had been sent to the United States. At still another, they had been put to the sword—not one being left to tell the tale.

The consequence was, no one could possibly know the exact state of things. The most hopeful sometimes doubted whether the republicans had held their own, and even if they had, thus far, whether discomfiture and disaster might not soon come upon them. It is little to be wondered, therefore, that Isabella could not, by any means she

could use, prevail on a chicken-hearted old Mexican to undertake her mission.

Indeed, Miguel — as well from his natural bent, as from the apprehension that the Señorita, on a favorable turn in the affairs of the republicans, would again urge him to the mission he had so often declined — took precious good care to glean all these ugly rumors whenever he was dispatched to town for news, — which, since the campaign fairly opened, was nearly every day. Moreover, he colored, and enlarged, and embellished them to suit himself, and that so artfully, that, with all the acumen she displayed in examining, re-examining, and cross-examining him on his return, she could seldom get out of him what he had really heard, much less could she get the naked and undistorted facts themselves as they had been brought forth during the throes of a revolution five hundred miles away.

Soon after the Americans reached San Antonio, however, the prospects for learning the true state of things began to brighten, until, at length, when Elisondo was so disastrously driven out of Texas, there were no longer any Gachupin newsfactors left to range betwixt San Antonio and Louisiana. Henceforth, for several weeks, there was only one side to all the rumors, wild and exaggerated though they often were. According to these, everything was going on smoothly for the patriots. It was now that Isabella resolved to make one more effort to persuade, beg, inveigle, or bribe, Miguel into the secret service which she had in view.

“Miguel, what news?” she said to him, one day, when he returned from Natchitoches. She spoke in Spanish, as, indeed, she always did in addressing him, — for he could speak but little else, and not much of that, really, but a lingo, which, by a sort of “loyal” courtesy, passes for it in Mexico, just as with us, in certain cases, greenbacks pass

for gold, though it is exceedingly difficult for anybody but a bondholder to see the justice of the arrangement.

"There isn't much, *Señorita*," he replied slowly, and looking a trifle downcast. The shade of dejection arose not at all from his having *no* news, but from his having, for once, nothing but good news. This was something which, in all his running to town, had never happened to him before: he had always been able to gather adverse tidings enough to serve as a foundation for a discouraging story. But to-day, although he had lingered in the place much longer than usual, for the express purpose, — ransacked every corner which promised anything of the kind he sought, and pumped, without scruple, every citizen who understood Spanish, he found not a single inauspicious item.

But, to give the devil his due, this old fellow, although he hesitated not, when it best suited his purpose, to distort most egregiously what he heard, would never tell a downright lie, or invent a rumor out and out. Hence his dogged aversion to opening his budget on the present occasion: he would not lie, and he had absolutely nothing to build on.

"What, no news at all?" exclaimed the *Señorita*. "Why, that, in itself, is news — and *good* news. When *you* can come home from town and bring nothing bad, but a bad countenance, it's a pretty sure sign there's a good time coming. Miguel, do put off that miserable expression, and tell me what you heard."

"I did n't hear anything worth telling," he replied, this time mingling a dash of sulkiness with his previous rueful look — a mongrel expression on a mongrel countenance, not very gratifying to one's æsthetic sense.

"Well, tell me what you *did* hear," she persisted, "and let me judge for myself of its value. Is our native town still in the hands of the patriots?"

"Yes — but I'm sure I've been telling you that every day for a month."

"And, Miguel, it's worth telling every day for a month longer, — more especially as, every time you have told me of it heretofore, you have predicted that they would not be suffered to hold it until the morrow."

"Oh, yes — to be sure they still hold San Antonio; but —"

"But what, now?"

"Well, they just have n't got any further: that's all."

"Did you ever hear that they expected or wished to get any further?"

"No — Señorita; but I thought —"

"You thought what?"

"Come now — let's have it: what do you think?" she went on, seeing that he was not disposed to reply. "Tell me what you thought, Miguel."

The Mexican still said nothing — so she once more went on:

"You thought, I suppose, that three hundred Americans, and probably about twice as many Mexicans, would have the madness to undertake to march to the city of Mexico."

"No — no — I didn't think *that*, Señorita," returned Miguel, looking a little abashed.

"Well, did you ever hear that they hoped or expected to do more than drive the Gachupins out of Texas, and keep them out?"

"No, Señorita."

"Well, have n't they driven them out? and do they dare return?"

"No, Señorita, they don't yet — but —"

"Oh, Miguel, no more of your *buts*! that is, if *this* 'but' belongs to the same family with the last one, and I dare

say it's a direct descendant,—most likely a degenerate one, too."

"Miguel," she said, after a pause, "you know as well as I do that the Gachupins will never come back to Texas; and as the way is clear now, I want you to —"

"I'm sorry I can't agree with you, Señorita," interrupted Miguel, well knowing what was coming next, and resolved, if possible, to stave it off, as he had so often done before: "I think they *will* come back."

"Miguel," said she, stepping close to his side and whispering in his ear, as though afraid the murmuring leaves above might repeat what she had to say, if spoken aloud. "If you will take a letter to San Antonio, and bring me a written answer, your reward for the service shall not be put off until the war is over, as I before proposed, — nor shall it be the same paltry sum."

"Pay me at once, Señorita, did you say? and — how much, Señorita?" he asked, in a low tone, evidently surprised no little; for he had considered her previous offer exceedingly liberal, — and if that was, in comparison but a "paltry" one, sure enough, how much, in the holy virgin's name, he asked himself, could this other one be?

The inquiries which he had just made of the Señorita were, in themselves, a sign that there was some hope at least of the old man's fears being overcome, — for never before this moment could Isabella interest him enough to lead him even to inquire how soon, or how much, he was to be paid in case of success, though she had more than once thrust that information on him, *nolens volens*, the proffered amount being increased each time. The danger of the undertaking had at last, then, even in his distorted judgment, so diminished, that avarice, of which he had no small share, was beginning to struggle in his breast for the mastery over fear, and cool calculation had already returned to his head

and gone to casting up figures. It was surely a cheering sign. And the lady resolved, now that this old iron was hot at last, to strike down upon it instant her one great blow which she had reserved as the final resort; — that failing to shape the stubborn metal to her will, all further effort in that direction to cease henceforth and forever as utterly futile. The prize sought was worth the venture: to succeed, would probably restore the happiness she had so strangely thrown away; to fail, would certainly perpetuate her present misery.

“Yes, Miguel,” she replied; “I will pay you at once, and it shall be a thousand dollars in gold.

“Well may you look surprised, old man,” she went on, as he stared at her with a startled gaze, which arose, as she well knew, partly from the sudden idea, that he could scarcely grasp, of his possessing so much treasure, and partly from wondering how she expected to get such a sum in a place like this. “You didn’t dream of my having so much? Well, I brought it from San Antonio, belted around me. Oh, you need not doubt it — it is here. It is hidden away — where, no one knows but myself; but if you will do me this service, it shall be brought forth, and all be yours — every dollar of it; and with it, you and Stefanita can be comfortable for the rest of your lives.”

Isabella, in saying this, not only knew that, before setting out, he would have to run the gauntlet of Stefanita’s objections and fears, — as in fact he had to do in well-nigh everything he undertook, — but that the old woman herself had a kindred touch of avarice which might be thus wrought upon to advantage.

“It makes me stretch my eyes, Señorita, to think of having so much gold,” said the old man; “but, then, when I think of how much you will have when you get back to San Antonio, it don’t seem such a great deal after all.”

"Why, Miguel, you surely don't mean to hint that I'm not offering you enough?"

"Oh, no — no — Señorita: it's not for such as me to hint that, anyhow. It is enough, and more than enough, if I can only do what you want done; and, God knows, I'll try my best, if my old woman will only let me."

Despite this positive disavowal, however, it is quite probable that Miguel did — and it is perhaps an irresistible impulse with avarice to do so — just for the moment hope he might be able to extort a little more from the lady, and that what he said was really intended as a hint to effect such a purpose. But scarcely had the base idea crossed his mind, when the thought of thus treating one who had always been so kind to him, made his cheek tingle with shame. Hence his prompt disclaimer.

Stefanita's decision proving favorable to the enterprise, Isabella wrote her letter, and in a few hours — after sundry very fussy movements in packing and preparing, on the part of the old couple — Miguel set out with it for San Antonio.

CHAPTER XLIV.

There is no lady living
So meet for this errand. *Winter's Tale.*

I beseech you,
If you know aught which does behoove my knowledge
Whereof to be inform'd, imprison it not
In ignorant concealment. *Winter's Tale.*

He tells her something
That makes her blood look out. *Winter's Tale.*

AFTER Miguel left the lake, Isabella and her companion did not, of course, hear the news so often as they had heretofore done with his assistance. A day or two after his departure, however, they began to feel the want even of such wild and unsatisfactory rumors as they had every reason to suppose still made their way daily into town; and before a week had passed thus, their longing to hear something had increased to that degree, that Filly declared she would endure such a state of suspense no longer, but would ride into Natchitoches herself, and gather whatever tidings she could.

"Things may be going on very important to us," she said, "and we, here, not knowing a word about it."

"Yes," replied Isabella, "a good many of our little army have been killed: that much we know, but as yet few of the names of the unfortunate ones have reached us. Some of our dearest friends may be among them — *my* dearest friends at least: it's only the singular number with you, if you have no very dear friend there except your father."

The Señorita may have expected to learn, by this remark, whether or not Filly really had a lover with the army, as she had long suspected. If so, she failed of her

object, for the girl chose to take no notice of the semi-query.

"Go, Filly, by all means," she added, after a moment's pause, "and try to hear something definite."

The girl was not long about starting. On reaching the town, she went first to the house of her old friend, Mrs. Davies, not only to make inquiries as to how and where she might best possess herself of such rumors as were afloat, but also because she really wished to see the old lady, whom she had not seen for nearly a year, and whose former kindness she still remembered with gratitude.

She met with a very warm reception; and after she had answered all the anxious questions propounded with regard to herself, she began to unfold the object of her visit to the town.

"Mrs. Davies," said she, "the Señorita has a good many friends living in San Antonio, and some in the Texan army, and I've come in to-day to try and find out something about them. Where ought I to go, that I may hear?"

"Why, honey, to General Bernardo, of course."

"You don't say General Bernardo is in town?" said the girl, in great astonishment.

"Yes—he got in last night, with his family, direct from San Antonio."

"How did he come to leave the army, Mrs. Davies?"

"I don't exactly know,—but I suppose, as the fighting's pretty much over—for a while, anyhow—he wants to get some more help by the time the Gachupins come again—that's, if they ever *do* come. But whatever brought him, I'll warrant you, he's got all the news, child. Everybody here that's got friends in our army has been around to his quarters, to hear about them—or is going. I went last night, to ask after Will,—that's my son. I saw a good many there, and a great many have been going to-day."

“I hope you heard good news of your son?”

“Oh, yes—he’s well enough, Will is. And what’s more, the General says he’s a splendid fighter. He never got but one wound, though: and that was only a scratch on his cheek from a musket-ball, at the Alazan. That’s close enough, dear knows; and I’m thankful it wan’t worse. Just to think, an inch or so to one side would ha’ killed him!”

Under ordinary circumstances, Filly would have taken a lively interest in hearing about the man who had always been kind and courteous to her. But as it was, she really heard little of what the old lady said—so little, indeed, that, had any one, a moment afterwards, asked her for information about Mr. Davies, I doubt whether she could have given a single accurate item concerning him,—except, perhaps, that he was alive,—and even of this she had only a vague sort of conception, gathered not from the words spoken, but from a general impression left on her mind, that the old mother’s manner was of quite a cheerful cast, and for that reason wholly inconsistent with such grief as she must have felt had she lost her only son.

She had not heard what was said, because she had been wholly absorbed in thinking, that, if she could only summon up courage to venture into the presence of General Bernardo—whom she fancied, for no better reason than that he was a general, a being of awful presence—how soon she might hear something reliable about the man whom she loved a thousand times more than all the world besides, despite the cruel treatment she had received at his hands.

“But be it ever so hard to do,” thought she, “I’m determined to go through with it.”

“Where’s the General to be found, Mrs. Davies?” she inquired, starting suddenly up from her seat.

Fortunately, she chanced—for it was by the merest accident—to do this just as the old lady had got through with her flight of what the General had said in praise of her dear Will, and had made a decided pause, though no doubt intending to begin anew just so soon as she could think of something else which the commander-in-chief had said about him. Filly's breaking her off did not, therefore, seem rude; and, so, by sheer good luck, her tender-hearted old friend's feelings were not hurt, nor was her previous good-will in the least forfeited.

Having received such directions as would enable her to find the General, she took a fond leave of Mrs. Davies and started forth. She found him alone; and so courteous and affable was he,—instead of grand and august, as she had expected,—that she soon forgot the painful embarrassment caused by the mere anticipation of the interview; and, with a little adroit assistance from him, she had no difficulty in entering at once into conversation about the business which had brought her there, and which she was all the more anxious to dispatch speedily, for fear of interruption by visitors, who, Mrs. Davies had said, were numerous.

“You have friends in the army?” he said, in an interrogatory tone, as soon as he saw that she was an entire stranger, at the same time rising from his chair and coming forward to meet her. These words were spoken almost immediately on her entrance, and evidently with the express intention of relieving the signs of confusion which she had brought into the room on her face.

“Yes, sir.”

“I am always happy,” he went on, “when I can give news of the brave Americans who have done so much for our freedom. Please be seated, and tell me who your friends are.”

By this time, Filly felt quite at ease; and, after declining the seat proffered her, said:

“General, do you know anything of Mr. Gatley?”

“Ah, my dear child, if *he* is a friend of yours, he is indeed one to be proud of. To be sure, he is only a private, but that only makes his conduct the nobler. A private, as you may know, has little chance of prominent distinction; but there is no officer in that whole army of better fame than Private John Gatley. And why he is not an officer, is a mystery to us all. He has been offered a commission after every battle we have had, and still he prefers to be in the ranks. But now that the war is over, so far as Texas is concerned, I hope he may be induced to accept some high civil office, for which his extraordinary talents so well fit him.”

King's (*alias* Gatley's) reasons for so persistently refusing a captaincy several times offered him, arose from a desire to remain, of all things, unknown to Gatewood. While, as a comparatively obscure private, he might manage to conceal from him his identity, his acceptance of a commission would necessarily lead, at times, to official and even personal intercourse with the man whom he once highly esteemed, but with whom he now felt he could never endure the agony of meeting—and not this only, but being recognized and claimed as an old friend, and made much of.

As well as the gentleman now under discussion stood in her esteem, Filly had already had a surfeit of the subject. Could she have been assured that no one would intrude, she could have endured a good deal more of Mr. Gatley for the Señorita's sake,—but having no assurance of this, she soon became sorely troubled lest she should at last lose her chance to speak of one incalculably nearer and dearer to her throbbing heart. In fact, although she had laid

away in her memory every word which the General had said thus far, it was only by dint of great effort and in accordance with a pre-determined process of mechanical absorption and retention, to be carried out at all hazards, and a consciousness that to do otherwise would be treating the Señorita shabbily.

"That's enough of *him!*" she thought. "I wish he would say something about Señor, without my asking him; but I don't suppose he will."

At this point, the girl heard — or rather imagined she heard — some one coming, and resolved to delay the important matter no longer. So she spoke at once.

"Is Captain — Captain Gatewood — well, General?" she asked.

"Yes — the Captain is well now. Is *he* a friend of yours?" said Bernardo, regarding her with a sudden change of expression, which, although she did not fully understand it, made her shrink back from him into herself.

"He's a mean old thing, after all his oily ways!" thought the girl, — "for he don't like Señor."

For policy's sake, however, she tried to overcome the feeling, and returned to the charge.

"You say he's well *now*, General: has he been sick?"

"No — not sick — but he was very badly wounded at the Alazan."

The girl grew deadly pale in an instant, to think how dreadful it would have been had he been killed: dead, and buried in the cold earth, two months ago! Bernardo observed her agitation, but with great tact, appeared not to do so, and went on.

"But it's no wonder Gatewood was wounded: the only wonder is that he has not been killed long ago; for I don't think I ever saw a more reckless man in battle. His men are brave enough for all purposes — even including the

forlorn hope — should that be required — but he ~~runs~~ ahead even of them.”

Now, although Bernardo recounted these exploits of Gatewood and Gatley as something which he himself had seen, the fact is, as long since explained, he was never near enough to a battle-field to see even in a general way, what was going on, — much less could he observe individual acts of bravery. Nevertheless, what he said, he knew to be true, for it was the common talk among those who *had* seen.

“Oh, Captain Gatewood,” he continued, as if to re-assure the girl, “is a splendid soldier. I don’t see how we could have got along at all without the Captain.”

This laudation of course set up Bernardo again in the impulsive and infatuated girl’s estimation; for if there is any one virtue which a romantic woman delights to hear, above all others, harped upon in the man she adores, it is bravery, — and there is none which chills her so effectually toward him as poltroonery.

“He’s a dear man,” thought she; and was wondering what he could have meant by that strange expression on his face, which had so repelled her for a time, when some one knocked at the door. On hearing this, as a closing interrogatory, she inquired after Isabella’s brother and uncle; and being told all was going well with them, after thanking the General, she took leave and withdrew.

The expression which had so puzzled her in Bernardo’s face on her asking after Gatewood, was, at first, one of searching inquiry. Conviction took the place of this, which, in its turn, was succeeded by commiseration. One less unsophisticated than Filly in the ways of the world, and more skilled in reading the human face, would have had little difficulty in rendering this plain physiognomical tablet into thought.

“Can this be a sister of Gatewood’s?” he had asked himself; and the almost immediate answer was, “No — they are in nothing alike; and as for a wife, or an intended wife, such a man could surely have no use for one. Alas! she must be his victim.”

And so she was — though not exactly in the sense in which he meant it.

“All may be well, yet, for both the Señorita and me,” thought Filly, as she rode back to the lake. “The war’s over, the General says, — and he surely ought to know. Señor is alive, and so is Mr. John, and if the Señorita’s letter only reaches him, it will bring him straight back to her. Then he’ll marry her, and take her away to his home in the United States. And, so, when Señor comes, he’ll find nobody to fight with — and nobody to marry but poor me.”

And as these happy thoughts took the place of the sad ones which had so long possessed her, tears of joy rolled down those cheeks, over which, for a long, wretched year, only tears of sorrow had found their way.

When she had nearly reached home, she started from a deep reverie over her anticipated happiness, and exclaimed:

“There now! I forgot to inquire after Mr. Whishton. That is *too* bad! The Señorita will ask me, the first thing, how my father is — whether he’s living or not. I’m so sorry I ever told her that lie, when I first saw her. But, then, I could n’t well help it. Well, let it go, *now*: all’s well that ends well, they say, and everything will soon be right with both of us. It’s lucky for me, though, that I happened to find this out; for, if she had asked me what the General said about my father, I should hardly have known, at first, what she meant, or who she meant; and I know I

should have blundered so in answering her, that she would have suspected me of deceiving her before, and perhaps would even have found out all about the matter, and what a big lie I told her. But if she asks me now, I can be ready with an answer."

The Señorita was very well satisfied with what news Filly had to tell her; for meagre though it was, it proved to be quite as much and of as good quality as she had any right to expect. All that the girl chose to unfold of her budget, revealed simply the facts, that the war was over, that her so-called father, and the Señorita's brother and uncle were well, and that Mr. King was still unscathed, stood high, and persistently refused all honors, which, otherwise, would have been heaped upon him.

There was one thing too evidently shown during this conversation to escape Filly's notice, ever alert as she was on this one theme: Isabella had not so much as hinted that she would like to know how Gatewood was, or even whether he was alive or not. This, she thought, proved, beyond all doubt, what had, all along, been a mooted point with her—that King was her first choice, and that the other was held as a mere reserve, in case of accident. This she considered to be exceedingly bad taste on the Señorita's part, but exceedingly good fortune for herself.

As Filly was much fatigued by her long ride, the two went to bed early that night. Their sleep was the most pleasant they had had for many a long month, in that it was deep enough to refresh, and yet richly interspersed with visions of happy meetings, smooth reconciliations, atoning words of sweetness, endearing caresses, blessed altars.

The first sorrow that came to mar this heaven of their long-tortured breasts, was caused by Stefanita's hoarse

voice at the door, announcing breakfast. It pained both no little to emerge from that fancy-land of elysian delights, into real life, although the day seemed to dawn upon them with hopes of a joyous future.

Alas! it *only* "seemed" so to dawn — that bright, beautiful, cloudless — treacherous day!

And that dream, (for their two dreams were so much alike they were as one,) so passing lovely, one might almost hope to enter directly the pearly gate on its wing, the guarding seraphim thinking the plumage celestial and letting one pass in unchallenged: what of *that*? Treacherous, too!

CHAPTER XLV.

This business
Will raise us all. *Winter's Tale.*

They say he parted well, and paid his score.—*Macbeth.*

Tell me what blessings I have here alive,
That I should fear to die? *Winter's Tale.*

JUST before midnight, the two sleepers were roused by a thunderous knock at the window of their room, accompanied by a loud calling of their names, and other vociferations in Spanish. The voice, as they started up, they recognized as Miguel's, — and immediately knew that, coming in the very unnatural guise that it did, it could bode them no good.

Isabella leaped from the bed, and hastily throwing over her night-dress her mantilla, ran to the window and hoisted it.

"What, in heaven's name, brought you back with all

this clamor, Miguel?" she demanded, with what calmness of voice and manner she could summon.

"Oh, Señorita!"

This was all the man could say, partly from terror, as of something that might be coming up behind — for he looked nervously back as he uttered the exclamation — and partly from the sheer exhaustion of bawling so loud.

"Do tell me what is the matter, as soon as you can get your heart out of your throat," cried Isabella, indignant at so much craven-heartedness in a man, — for she could see, by aid of the moon, that the eyes confronting her were stretched to double their ordinary size, from fright, and the rest of the countenance proportionately disfigured from the same cause.

"Oh, Señorita!" was, a second time, his only reply — if reply it could be called.

At this juncture, a real man, who had been standing close to the house and far enough aside from the window to be heretofore hidden from Isabella's view, stepped forward. It was plain he had lately been in some terrible conflict; for his clothes were in tatters, his hat was gone, and a very bloody bandage was bound about his head.

"I suppose, Señorita," he said, in clear, calm tones, "he wishes to tell you the patriot army has been terribly beaten and all is lost; for such is the fact."

"Si, Señor, y Señorita! si! si!" hissed out the old Mexican, in his native tongue.

Here, Stefanita, who had heard the clamor from her bed, made her appearance on the scene; whereupon Miguel fell into her arms, and they at once rushed off together, screaming, weeping, and well-nigh frightened to death. This deafening and disgusting nuisance quite out of the way, Isabella was on the point of availing herself of the opportunity to gather some particulars from the self-possessed man before her.

"Why, it's Mr. Davies!" exclaimed Filly, who had, all along, been standing inside, some distance from the window; but on hearing the voice, and thinking it Davies's, had come up to the Señorita's side, and was now peering out of the window, at his face, to make quite sure there was no mistake.

"Yes, Filly, it's Davies," the man replied; and his voice, as he said these few words, fell so low, and became so sadly compassionate in its tone, that the girl was convinced, from this alone, that there was awful news for her. For Davies must long ago have guessed what relation she and Gatewood once occupied towards one another,—and she supposed he sought to break the news to her now as softly as possible, because it was *bad* news.

On such occasions, it is not often that we can summon up courage at first to put directly the question that is nearest our hearts,—any more than can the messenger himself of the awful tidings bear to pour it all abruptly into our ears in one black and crushing sentence. Hence, the circumlocution now adopted by all concerned. Filly, for her part, shrank from asking anything at all.

"When you tell us all is lost, Mr. Davies," said Isabella, "do you mean there was great slaughter in our army?"

"Yes, Señorita. We had a battle on the Medina, and although a great many of the Mexicans who were of our army escaped, it was by running away early in the fight. On this account, the Americans had to bear the brunt of the struggle, and were nearly all killed, or so badly wounded that they could not get away."

"I suppose the wounded who could not get away were made prisoners."

Isabella said this — but she "supposed" no such thing; for, knowing the Gachupins as thoroughly as she did, it

was impossible to do more than *hope* so, and scarcely so much as even *that*. Therefore, although terribly shocked at the reply, it can scarcely be said she was surprised.

“No, Señorita — they were butchered where they fell — every one of them, I believe.”

“God help us, Filly!” she exclaimed, as she fell, weeping on the girl’s neck, — thinking, as she did so, not only of her lover, but likewise of her companion’s father — having yet to learn that that father was but a myth, while a far dearer than any father, though far less kind, was most probably gone from the poor girl forever.

The brave man outside, despite the hardening life he had led, was by no means callous to suffering, particularly when endured by the gentler sex; and as the mingled wailing of these two heart-broken women pierced his ear, it thrilled him to the minutest fibre. Each wild sob smote against his manly heart like a ponderous blow; and the glitter of tears might have been seen at that moment in the moonlight, as they coursed down his weather-beaten cheek.

Such an outburst could not endure long: it must needs, from very exhaustion, give place to a calmer mood. Soon the women unlocked their embrace and gradually released their hold on each other, when the younger sank down at once upon the floor and lay there prostrate. Isabella threw herself on her knees by the window, and folding her arms on the sill, bowed her face down upon them. In this position she remained for several minutes, in silence, probably offering up a prayer, — though God only can know what she prayed in her secret heart at that hour of utter inward desolation. Let us hope that her petition was granted.

At length she raised her bowed head and looked out, as if to ascertain whether the soldier was still before her. He was there; having lingered on the spot because he knew that when the first flood of grief had spent itself, the details

of the melancholy tidings would be sought by those so deeply concerned. So there she found him, his arms folded across his broad breast, his eyes cast sadly on the ground,—evidently unwilling to obtrude the stubborn, remorseless facts just as they were, yet ready to tell all that should be asked of him.

Seeing that he was still there, she said, with a choking voice:

“Will you tell me, sir, whether you know Mr. Gatley of our army?”

Instantly, on asking this question, and before he could reply, she bowed her head down again on the sill. She felt that the words of the man would be as much as she could bear, without watching the expression of his face as he gave his answer. She could not endure that both eye and ear should be so cruelly mangled at once,—well knowing that through *one* of these avenues the dreadful tidings, if come they must, would reach soon enough, and keenly enough, the sore, shrinking, sensitive heart below.

Davies, for his part, was very much surprised that she should inquire for Gatley, rather than for her brother, or Gatewood, to whom it had been pretty well understood in Camp Wildwood that she was betrothed. He, however, hurriedly conjectured, since there was no other conjecture left him, that Gatley was her real lover.

“Yes, Señorita — I knew him very well, indeed,” he replied, in a soft, low tone, which sounded to her like the moaning of a gentle wind around a grave.

“You *knew* him — but you do not *know* him. That is enough — that tells the tale — tells me all!”

There was silence for some moments, during which the lady still did not raise her head.

“He is dead then?” she said, at length. “Why not say so? Dead! You are afraid of the dreadful word. Speak, sir: is he dead?”

"Yes — he is dead, Señorita."

She did not scream at the "dreadful word," nor sob, nor even stir; and yet she had not swooned. She only remained still and silent for a little while, thinking and inwardly praying by turns.

"And my brother?"

"He was killed in the battle."

There was a brief pause.

"And my uncle?"

"The Padre is in the enemy's hands."

"God save him! with such monsters,—that is worse than death."

Filly had of course heard this conversation, but she had heard it in silence. She cared not to ask any questions. In fact, she could scarcely have brought herself to do so. She felt that if there had been any good news for her, — anything about Gatewood exceptional to all this widespread hopeless gloom, — Davies would long ago have been eager to tell her of it: but he had not even so much as hinted of such a thing. Feeling quite sure therefore that "Señor" was at last beyond her love forever, she cared but little what had betided others, or what might yet betide herself during the remainder of her blasted life.

Isabella, however, seemed a trifle more hopeful than this. On further thought, she began to catch desperately at any little straw that floated past her on this tide of blood. As we are fain to do at all times, but particularly when our life-long prospects of happiness are menaced, she began to feel that she would rather know the exact state of the case in all its details, agonizing though they might be, and then judge for herself whether or not there was the shadow of a hope left.

"Mr. Davies," she said, with this view, in faint, tremulous tones, still keeping her head bowed down, "were the

friends we have inquired after killed in the battle, or during the pursuit? I should be glad if you would tell me more fully about it."

Davies, assured by this open appeal for facts, and feeling that it at least cleared him of the responsibility of torturing his hearers by telling them the horrible naked truth, did not hesitate to comply.

"After nearly all our band," he began, ("I mean Captain Gatewood's band,) were down, either dead or mortally wounded, the Captain and Wynne and me found ourselves surrounded by about twenty of the enemy."

At this point, Filly leaped up from the floor, and coming forward to the window, kneeled beside Isabella; and the soldier—though not the lady—easily guessed which of the words he had spoken was the talisman that drew her thither.

"The battle had already been lost; and the very few that were not down with wounds were in full flight, pursued by the enemy. We three were hemmed in on every side, and could n't have got away if we had tried; so, we stood, back to back, and fought our best. We killed a great many of the Gachupins,—but it was soon all over with us, for Wynne fell, shot through the head; then they rushed up closer on the Captain and me. He fell next—and then I was struck to the ground by a blow on the back of the head. I don't know how long I laid there senseless,—but it was night when I came to. The enemy's camp was so near, I could hear the call of the guard; and as it was moonlight, I had to be cautious in my attempts to get away. I crept off as quietly as I could. The dead of both sides were scattered around in every direction. There were no wounded now: the enemy had carried theirs off—and butchered ours, and packs of wolves were howling and prowling about, feeding on them. As I crept along among

the bodies, I saw many of my old comrades in arms. Some were lying on their faces: I did n't recognize these, for I was thinking too much then about getting away, to stop and turn them over: I had only time to give a glance as I slipped along. I shall never forget how John Gatley looked. He was lying on his back, with the moon shining down directly in his face. He was thought the finest-looking man in our army; but I never saw him look handsomer than he did then, and I could not help stopping to look at him; it was the only time I stopped. He looked so natural that I stooped down to feel if he was not still warm — but he was cold enough. I raised his head a moment from the ground, to take a last look at the finest sample of a man I had ever seen — or ever expect to see. There was a little round bullet-hole right in the centre of his forehead. A red streak ran down from it to his long hair and soaked it through and through with clotted blood.

"I did n't see Captain Delgado after the fight begun; but one of our men that got away told me he saw his dead body near the enemy's intrenchments. I heard the Padre was arrested in San Antonio: a citizen that joined us in our flight said he saw them taking him to the prison."

Surely all this was bad enough. But Isabella's cup was not yet full.

CHAPTER XLVI.

O pardon me!

I'll pardon thee: I will shed tears for thee:

I'll wish to die with thee.

HEYWOOD.

About the wood, go swifter than the wind,

And Helena of Athens look thou find.

Midsummer Night's Dream.

AND this poor girl's father — what of *him*?"

The Señorita receiving no answer to this inquiry, raised her head again to ascertain why there was no reply. She saw the soldier lying on the ground, just where he had been standing but a few moments before. He was so nearly worn out by the terrible hardships incident to such a protracted and sleepless flight, that as soon as he thought his mission was over, he sank down there in his tracks, and almost immediately fell into a profound sleep.

"Oh, Filly!" said the Señorita, turning to the girl, "how could you let him stand here so long, and not ask a word about your dear father?"

Filly had often thought lately of making a clean breast of that matter by telling her friend, whom she had so long deceived, all about it: so she resolved that now was the time to do so. And this was the beginning of the end.

"Indeed, Señorita, Whishton was not my father, nor any relation of mine. I barely knew him well enough to speak if I happened to meet him."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I deceived you, Señorita, long ago; and I've often been so ashamed of it, that, more than once, I've been on the point of telling you just how it was, and why it was."

When Filly first said this, the other shrank a little from

her side; but thinking instantly how very deceitful she herself had been, and with what disastrous result, this led her on to think how paltry an exercise of charity it would be to forgive the same in this poor, friendless, untutored girl. So, curbing at once the rising indignation, she replied, mildly enough:

“Well, my dear, tell me now.”

“Yes,” said Filly, “it will ease my conscience somewhat, late as it is; and so I will tell you. I had no father in the Texan army, or anywhere else that I know of. For anything I can tell, my father may have died before I was born.”

“Then why did you tell me he was still living?”

“Why, you remember, Señorita, the very first time I saw you, I told you I had been living in the camp.”

“Well, was not that true?” asked the lady.

“Yes—that much was true. But I had reasons for not letting you know exactly how I lived there; and so I told you I was Whishton’s daughter, for fear you might think me something worse—that I had been kept by some of the men, like too many of the women in Camp Wildwood,—and that I was no fit company for you.”

“And have you still those reasons for not telling me how you lived in the camp?”

Filly, when she began, did not intend going any further than this; and even now, after her friend had propounded her question, she was on the point of ending the subject by replying simply:

“Yes, I still have those reasons; but I will say, my life there was honest and honorable.”

But she now, rather suddenly, came to the conclusion that she could be better contented for the rest of her days—that it would relieve a little of the remorse which helped so materially to swell her misery—if she should

confess to the Señorita the fatal blunder she had made in placing Gatewood's letter in his rival's hands: and in order to extenuate the act she must of course tell her of her own relations with that Chief. All which she now resolved to do.

As may well be imagined, Isabella, up to this point, had taken little heart-felt interest in the conversation. She had in fact kept it up, so far as she was concerned, only by considerable effort, and merely because she thought the girl seemed, for some reason unknown to her, very much interested herself. During the whole time of its progress her own thoughts were flying off to other things, and were brought back to the subject only by force. But henceforth to the end it was not so.

The girl having made up her mind to a full confession, instead of the affirmative reply which she had at first intended making, began with a negative:

"No," she said — "those reasons no longer exist, especially as my life there was a virtuous one; and I think I shall feel better if I tell you all about it — and other things besides. I lived with Captain Gatewood in the camp; but when —"

Isabella looked around at her with surprise.

"You mean that you — why, Filly, you just now told me your life while in camp was a virtuous one."

"And so it was, Señorita: only hear me. Captain Gatewood rescued me from the Indians when I was a little thing. I have always thanked him more for it than if he had saved my life; for no one can imagine the misery that he saved me from."

"Oh, yes — I understand it now: he adopted you, as his child — being childless himself — and you have ever since regarded him as you would your father, had you ever known your father."

"No — not exactly that either, Señorita: I'll tell you

about that and all the rest presently. When he rescued me, I could speak no language but such a jargon as the savages spoke. Señor — as I always called him — not only taught me his native language, but how to read and write ; and, now I look back at it, it must have given him a great deal of trouble, considering his habits and the kind of life he was leading all the time. But when he found I was anxious to learn and tried my best to do so, he always seemed glad to teach me, and never once got out of patience with me. But, then, Señorita, he was *always* kind and gentle with me — and never spoke a harsh word all the time.”

Here the girl, as she thought of those bright, fresh, happy, hopeful days, and then thought of the mangled, lifeless form that lay unburied and rotting, or torn by wolves, on the far-off banks of the Medina, broke down in her story, and had to stop for a while. But after wiping away the tears that fell fast over her burning cheeks, and bracing herself for the task, she was able to resume.

“He had a separate tent pitched for me near his own, and another, alongside of mine, for Mrs. Davies — the wife of that poor soldier there — who waited on me and always attended to me faithfully and kindly. Then, when I grew to be a woman, he had this house built and furnished for me to live in.”

“For you to live in, here by yourself?” interrupted Isabella. “Or were you to marry one of his men?” she added, as she recollected the blush that once came to the girl’s cheek when speaking of “one of the men.”

“Oh, no — Señorita : I was to marry *him*.”

“It is n’t possible that you were to be married to Captain Gatewood?”

“Yes, Señorita : we were to be married, and come to live here, the very day after he rescued you from those Spaniards.”

"And you loved him?"

"I had loved him for a long time — young as I was. And *how much* I loved him, Señorita, no one can tell!"

"Oh, you poor dear child! why did you not tell me this long ago?"

"Why should I tell you, Señorita?"

"Because — But I forgot that you did not know —"

"I know a great deal more about it than you think, Señorita," said the girl, on perceiving her friend's hesitation.

"But still I may not know all."

"What do you know, Filly?"

"I know that you and Señor were engaged to be married."

"And, pray, how did you find that out?"

"I heard the rumor, and I came here on purpose to learn the truth of it."

"And how did you find out the truth at last?"

"I saw a letter he wrote to you."

"You saw a letter that Captain —? You mean, you saw the address on the outside?"

"No, Señorita. Oh! if you but knew the misery of my suspense — not knowing whether all hope was gone — you would pardon me, I know, for what I did then."

"Oh, yes — Filly; I have been too wicked myself not to forgive everything you may have done."

"I found the letter lying open on the floor," said the girl, "the very day you met with Mr. John. I saw that it was in Señor's writing; and I almost knew, if I read it, I'd find out at once what I had been trying to learn for so long."

"And, so, you read it. Well, that was not altogether right, to be sure; but I don't blame you half as much for it, as I do for not telling me, when you first came here, of your relations with Captain Gatewood. Oh, Filly! if you

had only told me *then* that he was your betrothed, and that this was your house, all this wretchedness might have been spared us both."

"But," said the girl, "Señor was gone then, and it could have done no good — it would have been too late."

"Yes, it would have done good: it would not have been too late. For had I known *that*, I should have married the only man I ever loved, instead of putting him off, so that he never came back — and now, alas! never *can* come back."

Ah, how fondly prone are we to talk of what *might* have been!

"And, why did you hesitate about marrying him, Señorita, even as it was?"

"Filly, it is much too long and sad a story for me to tell you all of it. But I will say this much: that I engaged myself to Captain Gatewood, not because I loved him — for I never loved him — but because I thought him indispensable to our cause, and this was the only way I could win him to espouse it. I promised to marry him, should we prove successful, but not otherwise. I then thought my lover had long been dead; but I met him at last, and you must see in what a dilemma that placed me. Had I married Carlos and gone with him to Nacogdoches, as he wished me to do, Captain Gatewood must have heard of it, and would have withdrawn from the army with his whole command."

"Suppose I had told you, Señorita, what would you have done *then*?"

"Why, Filly, I should immediately have dispatched Captain Gatewood a note — for he was not then beyond my reach — telling him, that by his treatment of you he had forfeited every right to my hand, — and, but that he had placed my family and myself under such deep obliga-

tions to him by our rescue, he would likewise have forfeited my acquaintance, and — but for that, too — I should have hoped never to see him again.”

“Would you, indeed, have done so, *Señorita*?”

“I should, despite the risk of its estranging from the cause himself and every man of his command: nay, had I been certain it would have provoked him even to take up arms on the other side. Of course I should. Why, justice to you, Filly, no less than respect for myself, would have demanded that I should do so,—and nothing on earth could have prevented me.”

Nothing more was said for several minutes, and each went off into a painful reverie: (alas! must not all their reveries be painful henceforth?) The burden of Filly’s was, “Then, all would have been right. How I wish I had told her!” The burden of the *Señorita*’s was, “Oh, if Carlos had only returned to hear my explanation, this could never have been!”

But the girl had not yet told the worst. And had she foreseen the effect of the telling, this last mortal arrow had never been sped. Now, however, that she had commenced unbosoming herself to her friend, she resolved to go on to the end and leave nothing hid. After deceiving her so long and so grossly, it was but right, she thought, that she should wholly undeceive her ere the subject should be dismissed, perchance forever.

She began by asking a question.

“*Señorita*, if Mr. John had come back to see you that evening, would you have agreed to marry him?”

“Yes — I had fully made up my mind to do so, if he still thought it best, as he did at our meeting. Oh, yes — there is no doubt our marriage would have taken place — *here*, if we could have secured a priest’s services — if not, then, at Nacogdoches.”

"But Señor would have heard of it ; and that, you say, would have broken up the expedition."

"So it would. But, my dear child, think how much better it would have been for all in the end. Though I should have lost my home and my country, I should have had my lover, his home, and his country. But, alas ! I have now no country, no home, no lover ! Yours, too, would probably have returned to make you happy. So you see, whatever it was which prevented Carlos from filling his tryst, it has made a round of ruin for us all. Oh, if he had but returned for a single moment, even to fling scorn in my face, on my knees I would have pleaded for his forgiveness,—and I doubt not he would have granted it. But as this cannot be — can never be — it seems now, that if I could only know what that mysterious something was which kept him away, after parting so tenderly, and vowing that he would return to me, even *that* would give me some relief."

"Do you really think," asked Filly, calmly, "it would give you the least bit of comfort in the world to know that?"

"Yes — and for the simple reason, that, whatever it may have been, it could not possibly be worse than some of my misgivings and conjectures on the subject."

"I can tell you what it was, Señorita."

"Then tell me, for the love of God ! Was it anything dreadful?"

"Oh, no, I reckon not. Yes, it was, too,— for it was dreadful in me to do what I did."

"You surely did n't cause *that*?"

"I fear I did, Señorita. But I hope you 'll forgive me for that, too, as you have already forgiven me for reading that letter. And I almost know you will, for that was a selfish act on my part, while this one was done in a friendly spirit, though it ended so badly. I thought it would not

only bring him back to you, but that it would be certain to lead to your marriage; and then Señor would marry me. Oh, I little dreamed it would drive him away from you forever, and ruin both him and us!"

"Don't talk in that strain any longer, Filly: it puzzles me, and worries me so! Do tell me at once what it was, and relieve my suspense."

"Well, I will tell you, though I hate to do it. You may recollect that, on the morning of the day he had promised to return, I told you I was going to take a ride."

"Yes — I remember it perfectly."

"Well, I went to the camp, and —"

"What did you do at the camp, Filly?"

"Gave Mr. John that letter which you have just pardoned me for reading myself."

The shock from this piece of news was much more sudden to Isabella than it might otherwise have been, from the fact that, when the girl had told her a few minutes before, that she had read the letter, she had — though with some effort then — recalled its contents, and had imagined, as indeed she invariably did, whenever she thought of the horrid letter at all, "How dreadful it would be if Carlos should ever come to know what it contained!"

Now, however, from having just been conned over, every word came up again in an instant, freshly and vividly to her mind, — insomuch, indeed, that the mere naming of the letter in connection with *his* dear name would have made her shudder. How sudden then — how terrible — how crushing — came the knowledge that, for the last long year, through hardships and dangers, incurred, too, not for his own, but for *her* country's freedom, her lover must have been cursing her in that heart of hearts, where she had been, before, so long and so faithfully enshrined as something altogether too pure for this lower world. *That*, it was which had driven him away from her forever!

Yet she uttered not a single word — did nothing whatever that could hint of the fearful commotion within, which was even then stirring, lacerating, and breaking up the fountains of her spiritual no less than of her physical life. She simply leaned her head again on the sill, — as one might do, at almost any time, to relieve a slight weariness, — and there allowed it to remain like a passive weight that was no part of her most impassioned self — calm, motionless, wordless.

The girl was greatly surprised at this apparent composure. She had expected an outbreak either of grief, or of indignation, and was only wondering of what intensity it would be when it should come — whether she herself would have to dissolve in sympathy with the one, or be driven from her presence by the other.

Filly having told her whole story, had no more to say; and as her friend did not speak, a deep silence prevailed in the moon-lighted room. Presently this grew to be painful, and the girl, beginning to think it, in some way, boded ill, resolved to break it and meet the risk.

“Oh, Señorita! speak, for God’s sake! say either that you hate me, or forgive me!”

She said this in a very low tone, and as she did so, placed her arm gently about Isabella’s waist and bowed her head close to hers on the sill, until her breath came warm against the other’s cheek.

If that embrace had been an adder’s coil — that breath an adder’s hiss — the kneeling woman could not have sprung more quickly away from their pollution, and rushed from the room.

Filly, — utterly overcome by these manifestations of loathing towards her, from one whom she sincerely loved, and had, at the very worst, but unwittingly injured, — instead of following her, rose from the window and took refuge in her bed; where, for a long while, she gave her-

self up to alternate thinking and weeping. Poor girl, how could she, forest-reared as she was, be expected to comprehend the awful extent of her offending? As the hours dragged by and the Señorita did not return, she began to wonder what could have become of her,—and from wondering, she at length grew anxious lest something untoward might have befallen her.

Under this disquieting impression, she resolved to make such search as the unfavorable hour would permit; and after hurriedly dressing herself, went forth for this purpose. As she passed the door of the only other room of the small house, she opened it and glanced in. As it was lighted up by the moon, she could see, without entering, that there was no one within. So she passed on and continued the search about the premises—where she was joined by Grim—and along under the nearest trees. She then hastened down to the lake-shore and walked some distance along the beach, hoping to find her sitting there, where she had often loved to sit and muse, the while looking out over the water. But she was nowhere to be seen.

She next made her way to the tent of the old Mexican couple, who, on hearing her call, were of course frightened well-nigh out of any wits they may be supposed to have had left, thinking, no doubt, that the whole Gachupin host was upon them. She had not been there.

By this time Filly was seriously alarmed for her friend—or hostess, rather, since it seemed she no longer wished to be considered her friend. Her next step was to appeal to Grim. But, although he evidently saw that something was wrong and seemed to have a vague conception of what was required of him, yet, for once, he was too much befogged to be of any real service, and merely followed at his mistress's heels,—his usually unexpressive face, how-

ever, full of anxiety all the while about a matter for which he knew himself not qualified.

In this emergency, her only resource seemed to be in Davies; and although she was very loth to disturb him, worn out and wounded as he was, she soon decided that the urgency of the case demanded it, and resolved to enlist, without further delay, his valuable services in the search; for she well knew him to be one of the cleverest in woodcraft that could anywhere be found.

It was no such easy matter to wake him as it had been in the case of his nervous neighbors of the tent. Having fallen asleep entertaining a view of "the situation" entirely different from Mr. and Mrs. Miguel, he was by no means alarmed, or even startled at the sound of his own name. On the contrary, he seemed rather lulled than otherwise by the soft tones of the girl's voice in his ear; at any rate, she appeared to fancy that he did, for she soon abandoned calling, and substituted a vigorous shake. This had at once the effect of thoroughly arousing him; for, in the case of a soldier, a gripe may prove too serious a matter not to be instantly looked to. On seeing whose touch it was, he sprang up from the ground and addressed himself to listening intently to her words.

"Mr. Davies," she said, excitedly, "the Señorita has left the house — and I can't find her anywhere."

"What could she have left the house for, Filly, at this time of night?"

"I don't know — unless her grief was more than she could bear, and she hardly knew what she was doing."

"That might well be," said the soldier, sadly. "How long has she been gone, Filly?"

"About half an hour."

"Where have you looked for her?"

Filly told him where.

Davies at once turned towards the woods, calling on Grim to follow. The dog hesitated — probably about the propriety of leaving his mistress alone, at night, while she was not inside a house or tent. At any rate he cast an inquiring glance at her.

“Go along with Mr. Davies, Grim,” she said, in a tone half of persuasion and half of command — a tone which never failed, coming from her, to prove quite irresistible to Grim. So he lost no time in transferring himself to the immediate rear of the soldier’s heels, — where he closely stuck until both were out of sight.

“Mr. Davies,” said Filly, when he had gone a few strides, “might n’t Miguel be of some use in searching?”

The soldier halted to make reply.

“You could n’t get him ten feet into the woods, to-night, to save all the Señoritas in Mexico. But if you *could* get him there, and he was to hear an owl, or see a lightning-bug, he’d run back to you with all his might, and swear — if he had any breath left to do it with — that ten thousand Spaniards were charging on the house.”

Filly did n’t insist. And the soldier having vented his indignation against cowardice, (personified,) and no doubt feeling the better for it, sped away with his four-footed ally, and disappeared among the shadows of the trees.

Filly had no rest during the remainder of the night, — nor, to say truth, did she desire any. She was too anxious for the lone wanderer, whom her unintentionally cruel words had driven forth to fare and to habit with howling beasts. She roamed about in the vicinity of the house, peering as far as she could into the gloomy openings of the surrounding forest, with a faint hope that the Señorita might be descried there, returning, of her own accord, to the shelter of that roof which, the other began now to fear, she had left because it was not her own — and worse —

because *she* had *reminded* her of the fact that it was not her own.

"She perhaps thinks," cried the girl, in remorseful anguish, "that I told her this was my house, for the very purpose of driving her out of it!"

It was high noon before Davies returned; and then he brought neither the Señorita nor any tidings of her. No print of her footsteps had he found, nor any clue even of the direction she had taken. He was an adept in woodcraft—versed in all the signs of the passage of animals through these tangled mazes, even to the turning of a dead leaf, or the ruffling of a flower,—but of her, there was to be found no more trace than if her disembodied spirit had gone forth, leaving the flesh behind.

Tarrying only long enough to get something to eat, he set out again, assisted, this time,—besides Grim,—by Miguel, to whom he assigned a certain area for his special search. The Mexican seemed quite like himself again, now that the weird shadows of night had given place to day.

Toward nightfall they returned with no better success than Davies had had in the morning. Every day the search was renewed, but always in vain. All hope of finding her gradually died away; so that, at the end of a week, they gave her up; and Davies, very naturally, thinking it high time he should report himself to his wife, in Natchitoches, that she might at least know he was still in the land of the living, took his departure from the lake.

Before leaving, however, Filly made him promise that he would bring his wife—and his mother, too, if he could prevail on her to leave her present home—to live here with her. The girl hated the town, merely because it was a town; while, on the other hand, she loved the lake, despite all the unpleasant associations connected with it, better than any other spot in the world; and was resolved

to make her future home in this house, which had been built and fitted up for her by one whom she still fondly and devotedly loved—cruel though he had been to her—dead though he now was,—and had died, too, for another.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Why dost thou thus appear to me?

The Witch of Edmonton.

Are you sure

That we are awake? It seems to me

That yet we sleep, we dream.

Midsummer-Night's Dream.

In thy sullied eyes

I read a tragic story. — ROWLEY.

THAT night, about the same hour at which the Señorita had disappeared a week before, Filly was awakened, or dreamed she was awakened — she could not for her life tell which — from a sound sleep, by hearing her name called. On opening her eyes, she found a figure leaning over her, presenting, as well as she could judge by aid of such imperfect light as the moon shed on the chamber-floor, every appearance of being the Señorita herself.

The girl was of course startled. At first, she thought it all a dream; and so thinking, vainly tried to shake it off. She then put forth her hand and laid it on the one which was resting on the bed beside her.

“It’s genuine flesh,” thought she, “warmed by genuine blood—such as never come to us in dreams.”

“It’s your friend, Filly: there’s no need to doubt it.”

The girl instantly recognized the voice—failing, by rea-

son of her excitement, to observe the very marked change that had come into it.

"God bless you, *Señorita*!" she exclaimed, springing up, throwing her arms around her friend's neck, and kissing her several times. "You've come at last! I was so afraid you had left me altogether. Where in the world have you been?"

"Oh, never mind about that."

"But you'll never leave me again, *Señorita*, will you?" asked Filly, pleadingly.

"Only once more."

"And you'll forgive me — won't you? I did n't mean to do you, or *him* either, any harm, — indeed I did n't."

"Never mind about that either, Filly. Never let us talk again about anything that's past, or anything to come."

"What, then, shall we talk about, *Señorita*?" asked the girl, yielding instantly — (penitence makes us so very pliant!)

"The present," was the only answer.

"Well, *Señorita*, — what of the present?"

"Why, I've taken a sudden fancy to go to the lake — and you know I can't row. I want you to row me out to where those little islands are."

"To be sure I will do so, *Señorita*," replied Filly, starting up at once and commencing to put on her clothes, — though, at the same time, thinking this about the strangest midnight freak she had ever heard of. Her extreme anxiety, however, to gratify any wish of the *Señorita*, with the hope of thus thoroughly conciliating her, after having been so rude as to drive her away, was quite sufficient to account for the alacrity with which she complied with the strange proposition, demanding not the why and wherefore.

The night was a lovely one, and as they walked along beneath the trees, in silence, to the shore, noiselessly tram-

pling the checkered light and shadow under their feet, that impression of dreaminess, which such a scene invariably imparts to us, came over the girl in such force, that, for the second time to-night, she could scarcely think herself awake.

When they had descended to the smooth beach, by a flight of steps cut in the earth, Isabella, stooping down just where the bluff joined the sands, thrust her hand under the bank, to the full length of her arm, and drew forth something which, from the repeated failures she made in trying to raise it after it was dragged from its hiding-place, seemed to be unusually heavy for its bulk, which was but small.

"Here is something for you, Filly," she said, as she held it out towards the girl in both hands.

"What in the world is this, Señorita?" asked the other, as soon as she took hold of it, and felt its weight.

"Only just a little present from me. It may be of use to you, some day."

"Why," said Filly, "it's heavy enough for gold."

"That's just what it is."

"Gold?" exclaimed Filly. "Why do you give me all this gold? I don't want it: keep it, Señorita, for yourself."

"Oh, I have plenty besides: more than I know what to do with."

Filly, wishing, of all things, to avoid giving any further offence, however trivial, determined that she would, for the time at least, accept this singular present, so capriciously bestowed.

"But why," she asked, "didn't you wait till we came back?"

"Well, I just happened to think of it as we were passing the spot."

"But what shall I do with it now — I mean, until we return?"

"You can leave it here, if you choose, — or you can take it along. It is a belt, and you can fasten it about your waist, if you prefer it."

"So it is. Why, yes — that will be much the handiest way."

And she adjusted it accordingly.

They got into the boat; and while Isabella sat down near the bow, her companion took up an oar, and stepping to the stern, so as to have the assistance of her own weight in getting it off, gave a vigorous push against the hard bottom of the lake, and they were at once afloat.

Grim had followed them to the boat; and when they got in, he attempted to enter also, unbidden — something very unusual with him, for never had dog less presumption. On an adverse motion from his mistress, however, he desisted, and laid himself down at the water's edge, head erect, to watch their proceedings, showing no signs of disappointment; though a little uneasiness manifested itself in a whispered whining which he set up, equivalent, in the matter of feeling, to the downright howl of any other dog.

Filly now seated herself about midway in the boat, and taking up the other oar, pulled slowly and evenly, and they glided out smoothly enough toward the middle of the lake.

The feeling that all this was a dream, still clung to the girl. Nay, the more she thought of it, the less was she impressed with its reality. The being awakened in the middle of the night by an apparition, and summoned to follow forth amid weird and fantastic scenery, that looked like the work of some magician's spell. The old trick of finding a large sum of gold, so common in dream-land and fairy-tales, so rare anywhere else. The skimming along so noiselessly on the smooth water, surrounded on all sides by such scenes as enchantment loves so well to call up: — all

this seemed so unreal, that Filly was ready to exclaim, at almost any moment after she left the beach, up to the very last, "*It is a dream — I know it is!*" But her lips were sealed as by a spell. She thought of trying some plan to wake herself, which, however, ended in her thinking, "Oh, no — let it go on so: I'll wake soon enough to something worse than this!" Thus it was that to the very end she could not realize what she both saw and felt: for so far from contradicting the view she had taken — or rather, the view that had forced itself upon her — everything conspired to confirm it, more and more, from this time forth. Indeed, I hold it by no means impossible that we may even die, thinking death itself all a dream. And surely this was as fitting a time, and these were as fitting surroundings for such a death-dream as could well be brought about.

It was such a night, for loveliness, as is rarely seen. There was nowhere any sign of a breeze. The leaves hung absolutely motionless on their boughs. A few fleecy clouds, motionless too, flecked the sky above, pleasantly relieving the otherwise unbroken blue. The surface of the lake was of glassy smoothness, save where a flock of wild ducks, roused from their sleep, drew out their heads from under their wings, and seeing the approaching boat, paddled themselves out of its course; or save where the dripping oar, or the gliding prow, turned off a miniature wave, that flashed an instant in the moonlight and then went careering gracefully away, in still widening but gradually dying ripples.

Beyond the narrow area of this slight commotion the moon, and starry clusters, and the little clouds were imaged as clear and distinct as their substance appeared above; while two conspicuous twin-stars of almost equal size and glory, and very near each other, were just disappearing behind the western trees.

How sadly would these palpable beauties have contrasted the invisible freight of misery that was now obtruding itself into their midst, could this have been seen, as such, by the physical eye. It would have seemed not unlike a hell-smirch on an angel's cheek. The very mocking-birds appeared to feel its marring influence. They had all along been singing merrily enough, as they are wont to do in that balmy clime, so long as the moon is abroad. But when the woe-laden boat swept across that elysian scene, those gay songsters were awed into instant silence; and although a solitary one out of all the tuneful host ventured presently to break forth again into song, his song was no longer as it had been. For he now left his perch in the cheerful brake, and burying himself in the gloomy boughs of a cypress, chanted a song of such tristful sort as no bird before or since ever poured forth. One might think it would have broken the heart that gave it birth — even though a bird's.

Reaching the vicinity of the islands, the Señorita made a sign to Filly to stop. The girl had not yet had a good view of her friend's face. While the two were yet in the house, and during their walking forth beneath the trees to the shore, there was but little light; and before they had gone far enough on the water to be fairly beyond the skirting shadows, Filly, in order to row to advantage, had necessarily seated herself with her face to the stern, and her back to Isabella, who sat near the bow. Now, however, when they stopped, the girl, after shipping the oars, shifted her position, so as to sit facing the Señorita, and very near her. The moon was shining full on her face.

Filly was so shocked at the change in both feature and expression, that she almost screamed out at the sight of that wasted, worn, ghostly-white face — that hair wildly tangled — those sunken cheeks — those hollow eyes. And

it was well, perhaps, there was not light enough to show her, to the full, the strange expression of those eyes. Her mantilla, still wrapped about her and fastened over her bosom, was much torn,—as was also such of her embroidered night-dress as showed below it, about her feet.

After the first shock was over, Filly, as she continued to look on this pitiable sight, was so moved that she burst into tears, the Señorita, all the while, sitting calm and apparently unmoved. She may have been listening to that melancholy bird,—for he was still singing. Neither spoke a word, had not spoken since they left the shore. Why the lady chose to remain so silent may well be left to the reader's imagination. The girl for her part could think of nothing to say. What, indeed, could she have said—could any one have said—that had not been far better withheld? Could any words of hers have availed to lift a feather's weight from the utterly crushed woman before her? A voice less than divine would have been worse than mockery.

At length the Señorita, unpinning her mantilla, pushed it back from her snow-white, emaciated shoulders, and it fell into the bottom of the boat.

“Do you hear that bird?” she said. “He must be singing somebody's death-dirge.”

Poor Filly's heart was too full to answer this simple remark, even had it required to be answered.

As Isabella said this, she rose, and looked down for a moment into the water. As she did so, a slight shudder struck through her frame. And now, for the first time, the dreadful truth with regard to her friend flashed upon Filly,—and immediately after, a dreadful thought with regard to herself, as she too rose from her seat.

“There! the bird has ceased. How suddenly! Don't you suppose he's dead? that song was enough to kill him.”

As Isabella said this, she took her eyes from the wave, and instead of directing them upon her companion to whom she was speaking, as one might suppose she would, threw a glance aloft on the spangled sky, and for a few moments looked as intently at its twinkling orbs and into its blue depths, as though she knew it would be her last look.

“See those two stars just setting!” she said. “But why should there be more than one?”

The girl, as before, made no reply: though she might well have done so, for she saw clearly enough, so far as reading the future in those stars was concerned, why “more than one” should be just then trembling on the horizon.

“Farewell, Filly,” said the Señorita, opening her arms.

Then followed a long and lingering embrace. “Long and lingering,” indeed, it was!

“There! let me go now, Filly!”

“Never!”

“Then, you will have to go with me.”

“Yes — yes!”

They gradually leaned further and further over the side of the boat, until it glided away from under them, when they fell, together, into their wide, wild grave, with a heavy plunge. The water once closed over them, there was no coming to the surface, now, nor ever again: the weight of the gold bore them at once to the bottom, where they remained.

At the sound of that sullen plunge, many a bird started from its perch and fluttered about the brake in wild alarm. Many a wild duck rose from the water, and on whistling wings, sought refuge at the remotest end of the lake. One after another, a few clusters of bubbles came to the surface, were rudely tossed about for a while on the still agitated water, then, one by one, burst into nothingness, — typifying

well the brief, stormy, fruitless life, and the sudden death, of those below.

All this was but fairly over, when there rose from the shore, just where the boat had started forth, the long-drawn howl of a dog,—so piteous that Death himself, could he have fore-heard it, might have withheld the dart, just sped, which called it forth. Then there was a plunge from the beach out into the water—and all was still as before.

CHAPTER THE LAST.

This is that face, thou cruel Angelo !
Which once thou swor'st was worth the looking on ;
This is the hand which, with a vow'd contract,
Was fast belock'd in thine. *Measure for Measure.*

If you can bring
Tincture, or lustre, in her lip, her eye,
Heat outwardly, or breath within, I'll serve you
As I would do the gods. *Winter's Tale.*

AN hour later, a man of stalwart form, his clothes torn into rags, his face haggard, one of his arms carried in a sling, and much disabled in one of his legs, limped forth from the deep shadow of the woods by the lake and made his way towards the house. He paused before the door, and seemed to hesitate a moment whether he should enter. The mournful howl, which still went up at intervals from about that watery grave, may have caught his ear,—for, instead of going into the house, as he had probably intended, he walked around it and sought the shore of the lake, glancing at the empty hammock as he passed along.

He found the boat drifting near the beach ; and wading out to it, he took up the mantilla which lay in the bottom.

"It's hers!" he said, in a hoarse whisper.

That howl rent again the still air. It came from among the group of islands. Stepping into the boat, the man took up an oar and sculled off in that direction — for, with but one arm, he could not row.

"Grim! is it you?" he said, as he reached one of the islands. "You have found your voice too late, I fear, old dog! Get in here, and show me where it is: I know it's somewhere near."

The dog got into the boat; and looked, and continued to look, intently over the side, down into the clear, shallow water, while the man sculled around so slowly and smoothly as scarcely to stir the surface in the slightest degree. Presently the dog began to howl most piteously, with his eyes steadily fixed on one particular point at the bottom of the lake. The man laid by his oar, and creeping up to the dog's side, looked down, too, at the mysterious object.

He looked not long! Up from that liquid crystal, illumined by the moon almost to the brightness of day, had come to his eye a spectacle he well might shrink from — the beautiful, sad face of a heart-broken girl. The wide-open eyes were looking directly up into his, and he could not endure the sight, although he knew she was dead: nay, *because* he knew she was dead — for he also knew he was her murderer.

He saw, too, another figure clasped in her arms, but the face was turned towards the bottom, and he had to guess whose it was. But he could not guess amiss.

With a cold shudder, he rushed away; and regaining the oar which he had dropped, was, the next moment, gliding shoreward with all the speed he could make.

Ah, cruel man! so far as love alone was concerned, you

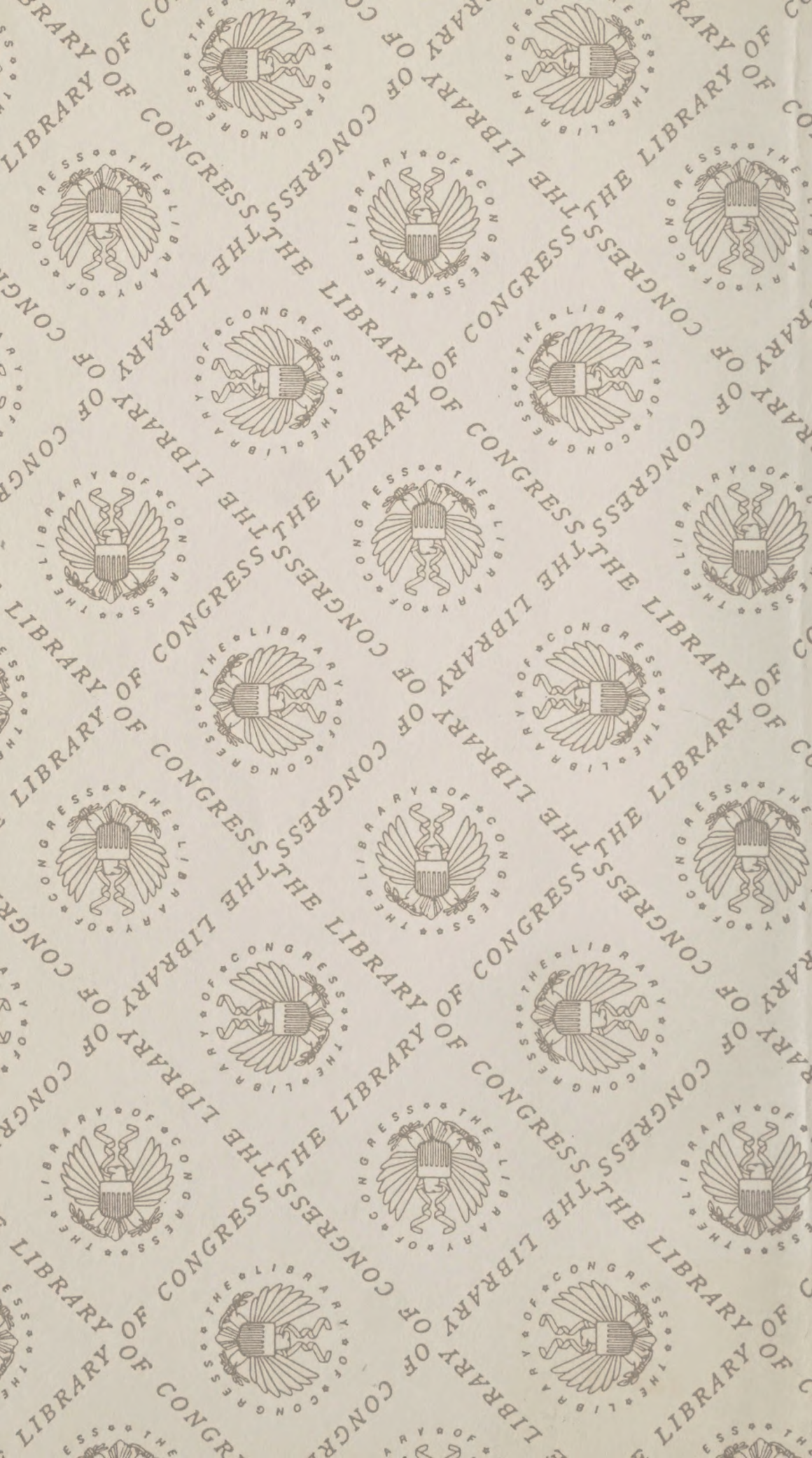
might have lightly forgotten that sweet, sad face. But by that one glance, *remorse* will hold it up to your memory for ever and ever!

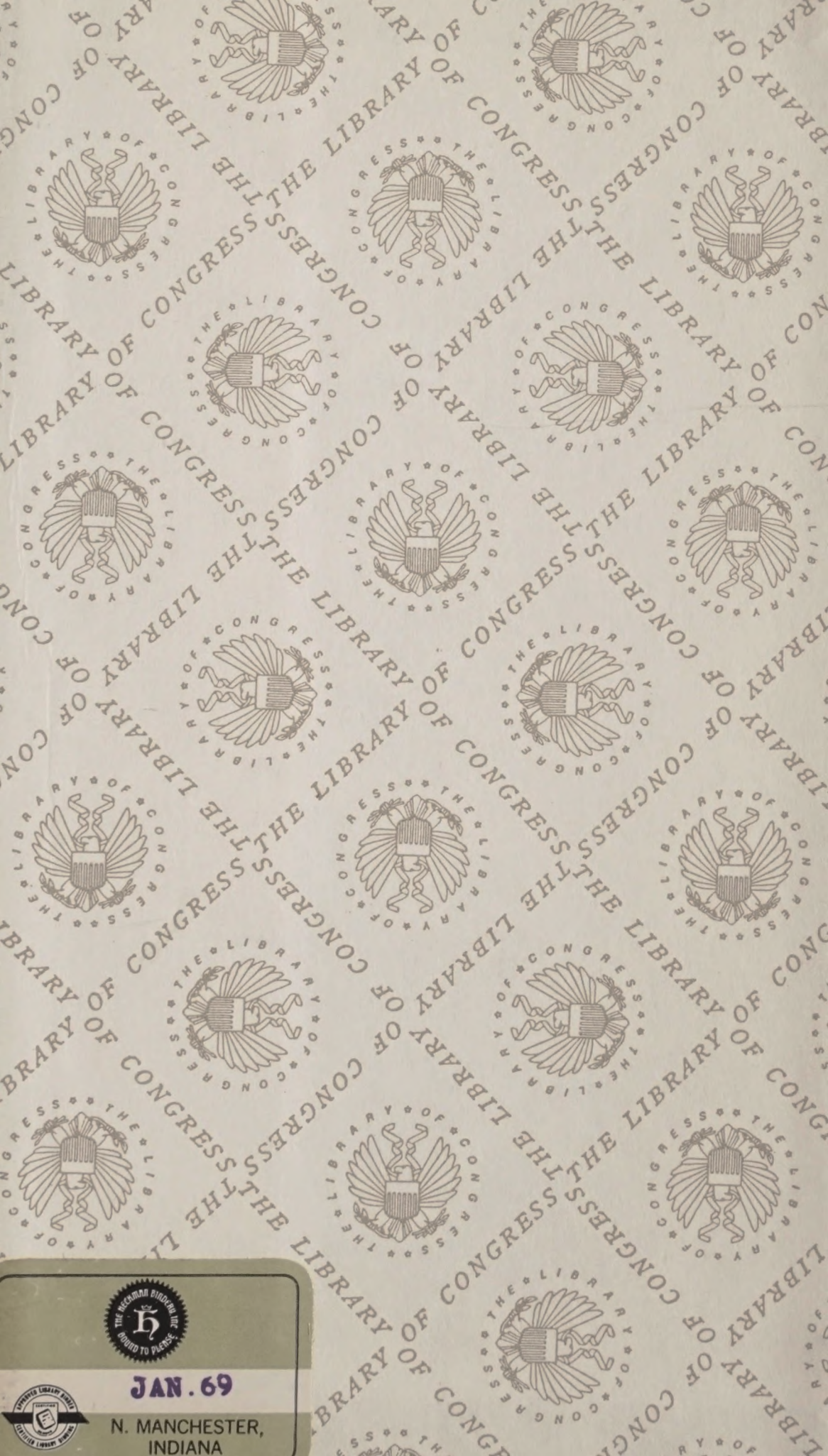
Yet severe as was this shock, still another awaited him. In repassing the house — on his way, he scarcely knew whither — he recoiled from entering where he could hope for nothing better than tormenting associations and eloquent reminders of more hopeful days. But on catching sight of a small white object lying on the ground close beside the window of the Señorita's room, an irresistible impulse to see what it was, and whether it gave any clue to this tragic mystery, yet only half solved, drew him a step or two out of his way to secure it.

He found that it was a letter; but as to who had penned it, to whom it was addressed, or of what it treated, the present darkness kept him in blissful ignorance. When, however, the morning shall break upon him, stretched — somewhere, he knows not yet whereabouts in the forest it may be — on his wild bivouac of leaves, tortured in mind, and wrecked in hope, he can *then* read it at his leisure, and with what comfort he may.

He will find it to be the Señorita's letter, intended for the man she really loved, whom it never reached. It had been handed back, by Miguel, mechanically, to the writer, on the night when the disastrous news reached the lake, and probably laid by her on the sill; whence the wind had blown it to the ground. While it will tell him all, and add humiliation to his other pangs, it will by no means soothe his rankling remorse; for, as he already knows that she whom he deserted was all his own, he will learn from this missive, that she for whom he deserted her was all another's.

THE END.





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